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Student and Teacher Perceptions of Multiliterate Assignments Utilizing 21st Century Skills

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Student and Teacher Perceptions of Multiliterate Assignments Utilizing 21st Century Skills

by

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Abstract

Today's society requires students to be knowledgeable in both content and skill to be successful. In the secondary classroom it is important to fully prepare students for their futures in the post-secondary classroom or for their career, and through the implementation of Common Core State Standards, this focus has been emphasized in educational pedagogy. This thesis outlines a study and the implications of the perceptions of teachers and students on utilizing 21st century skills in the secondary English classroom through the implementation of multiliterate assignments. This thesis outlines reasons for the study, important terminology to ground the study, the methodology, the results, and conclusions of the study. This research was designed to understand: how student and teachers believe multiliterate assignments impact students' ability to utilize 21st century skills; how those 21st century skills are present in multiliterate assignments; and what effects the use of 21st century skills have on the mastery of course content. The study focuses on a qualitative approach to analyzing if teachers and students believe that multiliterate assignments help to facilitate the use of the 21st century skills of communication, creativity, problem-solving, and critical thinking. Through surveys and reflection data collection, teachers and students indicated that multiliterate assignments do facilitate the use of the four main 21st century skills that are needed for college, career, and life. This research indicates that utilizing multiliterate assignments in the English classroom can benefit students in preparing for life outside of high school.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In the teaching of writing class, that I took during my graduate studies, we completed an assignment where we were encouraged to take a traditional assignment we normally assign to our classes and make them something new and exciting in our classroom, or theoretical classroom if we didn't teach. We had just finished learning about multigenre assignments, and I knew that my *Romeo and Juliet* unit was coming up soon. I hated the assignment that I had before for that unit, and I thought this would be a great opportunity to try something different. I started to create the multigenre assignment for the class, and in the next few weeks, I implemented the assignment into my actual classroom. I noticed that my students did really well, and they seemed to understand the play more when they were required to write in the different genres as we worked through the play. I had the students writing: journal entries, a letter, a scene re-write, and a critical essay. The students really enjoyed becoming the characters for the journals, and while they found the scene re-write difficult because of the language, they eventually showed their understanding of that too. I got very excited about the idea of using this type of assignment in my classroom. The students showed great understanding of the content; they were doing a lot of the work on their own, and after they finished complaining about the initial length, a lot of the students said they liked not having to just write a paper on a topic they didn't fully understand. Using this assignment in my classroom helped me to question if the traditional assignments that I was still using in my classroom were the right fit for my students. What would happen if I turned more of my assignments and projects into multiliterate pieces where the students were the creators and researchers of their own learning?

Working with multiliterate assignments is something that has not been researched a lot in the secondary classroom. There are many factors that influence how secondary classrooms

operate. Currently, the inclusion of multiliterate assignments into the secondary classroom pushes against traditional composition pedagogy, current traditional education pedagogy, and may or may not align with the outside standards teachers are required to use.

This experience helped me when I was coming up with a topic for my thesis. I could see the value in including multiliterate assignments, but could other teachers or my students see the value? On top of those questions, I wanted to dig deeper to understand the benefits of multiliterate assignments for student learning of content and 21st century skills. Also, how do multiliterate assignments align with emerging composition theory? How do multiliterate assignments align with state standards?

A Move From Traditional Composition Theory

Multiliterate assignments move away from traditional writing assignments. Composition studies as a discipline really began in the early 19th century; however, it wasn't until the 1940s that composition began to be valued in colleges and universities with the institution of first-year composition courses. In the 1940s, it was widely recognized that writing was instrumental and “should be regarded as a basic mode of learning and the writing course [should be] a key component of any core curriculum;” this was known as the general education movement (Varnum 48). During this time, many colleges “began to use placement tests and ability grouping in the hope of providing more effectively for individual student differences” (Varnum 48). Students could be measured by their current abilities and placed into the writing classes that they would need to help them be successful in their future careers. Being a literate citizen was extremely important, and colleges and universities wanted to do their part in educating the future workers and leaders of the United States. Literacy was seen as being able to read and write, where linguistic text was the most highly valued form of literacy. By enrolling students in

writing courses, it ensured literacy was valued and taught to the students. This helped to prepare them for life outside of colleges.

Composition studies didn't stop there. Just twenty years later, during the 1960s and 1970s, "pedagogy about how to compose and create using the writing process began to emerge" (J. Lauer 114). During the 1970s and 1980s, rhetoric and composition began to gain status at the universities and began to establish itself as a discipline, where it was taught in undergraduate and graduate level courses at an even larger scale than before (J. Lauer 109). Not only was literacy through writing valued, but the actual process of composing became important. Still, linguistic writing was the most valued form of literacy. Colleges and college professors still expected that all students would know how to write effectively.

However, around this same time period, scholars began to question if linguistic writing really was the best way to judge the literacy of our students and population. In the mid-1960s, "there began to appear a number of publications that pointed to the potentials of providing students with increased representational options" (Shipka 4). These options explored other forms of literacy besides linguistic writing by giving students creative freedom in what they chose to create. It was not until the 1990s and 2000s, that the exploration of "the benefits of allowing students to experiment with alternative, blended, diverse, mixed or experimental discourse, with proponents maintaining that these discourse forms and mixed genres 'enable kinds of rigorous academic work that simply cannot be done with the traditional discourse'" occurred (Shipka 4). This is where the idea of multiliteracy was coined. Multiliteracy is the ability to create in different modes and genres and blend them together to create meaning for specific rhetorical purposes. While the idea that linguistic composition may not be the only way to measure and teach literacy was researched in the sixties, it was not until forty years later that scholars began

looking at the benefits of including multiliterate types of texts and assignments into the classroom. Today, the idea of multiliterate texts and assignments are still being questioned as to their value in the classroom. Cynthia Selfe argues that the “history of writing in US composition functions to limit our professional understanding of composing as a multimodal rhetorical activity and deprive students of valuable semiotic resources for making meaning” (617). In composition classes, the focus is mostly on print writing, but that is not what benefits the students the most in Shipka’s eyes. Linguistic writing as the only form of literacy confines our students and does not allow for expansion of communication and understanding of the literacy that is valued in the world today. Kirby and Crovitz explain that unfortunately, our students fail in our classrooms to find meaning from sources other than print because they lack the vocabulary or do not know how to use an image as a text, yet every day students interact with commercial sites, (sometimes) campaign websites, gaming systems, and social networking where they can analyze and create meaning from different modalities. The students I teach are already doing this every day, so teachers should take advantage of the skill set students already have and help them hone it even more.

Multiliteracy is gaining more popularity today and being taught in graduate and undergraduate classes in colleges and universities. Some of those students who take those classes, like me, are even including these types of texts and assignments into their own classrooms, secondary and post-secondary classrooms. While more research is being done, there are still questions remaining as to the value of these texts and assignments for students in the classroom. Through my study, I look at the question of how valuable are multiliterate assignments in the secondary English classroom through teacher and student perceptions.

A Move From Traditional Education Practices

Traditionally, classrooms worked in the banking model for education. The banking model term was coined by Paulo Freire (Alam 27-28). Through this model, he viewed students as empty containers where teachers lectured, and students were supposed to sit at their desk, absorb information, and then be able to regurgitate that information back to the teacher (Alam 27-28). This model has been seen in the past as the student learning. However, this is not always the most effective way for students to receive information. Today's student does not respond to the banking model pedagogy that has been used for so long. Today's students walk into the classroom with their cellphones in their hand, headphones in their ears, and already bored by first period. They sit down, and the teacher asks for all cellphones to be put away and begins the lecture. Then, the student is asked to try some practice problems independently, the bell rings, and the student moves on to the next class, ready to do the same thing for the rest of the day. When the students go home, they are much more active in multitasking and using their senses: they log on to the computer or their gaming systems, have their smartphones attached to their hands at all times, and interact with family and friends, yet students know that the next day, they have to go back to school, sit in their seats and be bored out of their minds because they are expected to just sit and listen. Today's students have never known a time when they haven't had access to technology, where they haven't been able to find something at the touch of their fingers, where they haven't been challenged to learn or try something new on their own. J. Lambert and P. Cuper argue that children today have been immersed in technology since they were born, but many of their teachers are still trying to familiarize themselves with technology tools and do not know how to include technology or hands-on learning like our students currently need.

Our students today work better in a hands-on environment where they are looking up information, solving their own problems, and finding new ways to learn the material fully. Classrooms that encourage this type of learning are considered student-centered classrooms where the teacher is the facilitator of the learning, but the student does much of the work. Classrooms are slowly becoming more hands-on; STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) and STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math) programs are sprouting up in schools across the country, problem-based learning (PBL) projects are being introduced, and teachers are attending training to incorporate student-led instruction. Our students are changing, and the classrooms have to change as well, but just because these programs are being introduced, it doesn't mean that teachers find value in this type of teaching. Cooper et al. states, "today's learners... live in the evolving digital world where learners are required to 'construct knowledge in non-linear environments using a range of tools' (93). While some professional development is available to teachers, many teachers are not versed in how to educate students in this new type of environment or prepare students for what they need to do for the changing world. Even teacher programs cannot educate new teachers fast enough for the future technology and tools that will be used in the classroom when those teachers graduate. What is being done though, is the education system is working to reinvigorate classrooms through standards, training, programs, and resources to make education more accessible to our students. Educators need to use the technology and tools that are becoming available in the classroom, instead of relying on the banking model to teach the students. Research on the impact of the division from the banking model has to be conducted for teachers and students to examine the value in this new way of teaching in the classroom.

A Move To Incorporate Appropriate Standards

High schools are also trying to better prepare students for the expectations they will have when they graduate from high school by adopting the new Common Core State Standards throughout the U.S. The Common Core State Standards are a set of standards that were introduced to the fifty states and territories in the United States to help align curriculum across the country. “The standards were drafted by experts and teachers from across the country and are designed to ensure students are prepared for today’s entry-level careers, freshman-level college courses, and workforce training programs. Common Core focuses on developing the critical-thinking, problem-solving, and analytical skills students will need to be successful” (“What Parents Should Know”). The standards focus mostly on math and literacy with the idea that the literacy standards can be used not only in English/ Language Arts classes, but that the key skills will be transferred in the to the history/ social studies, science, and technical subject areas as well. The goal for literacy standards is to ensure that all students learn to “read, write, speak, listen, and use language effectively in a variety of content areas,” which promotes “literacy skills and concepts required for college and career readiness in multiple disciplines” (“English Language Arts Standards”). The standards are aligned with the goal of increasing literacy for all students in all classes.

Throughout different initiatives, such as Common Core, there has been a push to help students not only learn content but also the skills that will be required of them in post-secondary institutions and career fields. Part of the way that this is being accomplished is through the focus of utilizing the 21st century skills of critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, and communication in the classroom as a way to solve real-world problems through the content that is being taught in the classroom. This can be seen throughout all grade levels and classrooms in schools. In the 21st century, students have to have a different set of vocabulary and skills than

ever before. Students are being asked to work with materials that are new, such as computers and modalities or genres that they, and maybe even their teachers, have not had training on. They use advanced technology and new processes that require students to think about their process of actually completing the assignment.

According to the Common Core standards, students are supposed to be developing their critical-thinking, problem solving, and analytical skills. While Common Core provides the means to deliver the opportunities to develop these skills, it is not the only agency that believes students need these 21st century skills to succeed; the World Economic Forum states, “the gap between skills people learn and the skills people need is becoming more obvious, as traditional learning falls short of equipping students with the knowledge they need to thrive,” for “today’s job candidates must be able to collaborate, communicate and solve problems” (Soffel). Envision, a program developed for elementary through college students, states, “Hanover Research recently analyzed six major educational frameworks designed to improve the development of 21st century skills,” and “while each frame work has slightly different list of 21st century skills, all agree on four critical areas for development: collaboration and teamwork, creativity and imagination, critical thinking, and problem solving” (Envision). Since teachers are tasked with not only preparing their students in the content area, but also in creating opportunities for the mastery of these skills, the way that teachers teach their students has to change in some respects. Luckily, in this new digital world, there are more resources and opportunities for students and teachers, specifically in the English classroom where literacy has always been valued, even as it has changed throughout history. Educators have access to the tools and resources for their students and are being encouraged to use them in the classroom and teach the students how to use them also.

Currently, there is a push for educators to move away from using PowerPoint in the classroom as presentation software, so even through the job of education, teachers have to find a way to present information in different modalities and media. English teachers, among other educators, are beginning to move towards a classroom designed to teach students 21st century skills in different ways that will prepare students for their futures in a post-secondary school or career field.

Just because businesses say students need these skills and the standards say we can teach them in classroom, is that realistic? With the introduction of Common Core and 21st century skills, this outside government agency is dictating what teachers must teach in their classroom. Teachers are required to use these standards in their classroom, and the students are tested on these standards at the end of the semester or year. While this has been done in the past, tradition is not enough to have an outside agency saying teachers must do these things. Instead, it is imperative to take a closer look at how and why we need to implement the standards and specifically the use of 21st century skills. Through the conducted study, I am researching student and teacher perceptions of the value and usefulness of multiliterate assignments and the assignments' ability to have students utilize the 21st century skills.

Research

Moving forward, it is important to measure teacher and student perceptions of incorporating multiliterate assignments into the classroom. My guiding questions for this survey are: Is using these assignments helping to expand the definition of literacy, and is that valuable in the teacher and student perspectives? Are multiliterate assignments effective in creating student-centered classrooms that move away from the current banking model? How do multiliterate texts

and assignments help students to utilize the 21st century skills that outside agencies state students need?

Chapter 2: Literature Review

As stated in the introduction, the implementation of 21st century skills into the classroom has been of increasing importance for states that have implemented Common Core standards. Charles Kivunja states, “it is thus a pedagogical imperative that education providers at all levels of instruction and learning provide effective training in these skills so that their graduates will be ready to apply them in the workplaces and occupations that they will enter on graduation” (45). The study that is being conducted is trying to ascertain if teachers and students believe that multiliterate assignments help to implement these skills effectively into the classroom while also offering an expansion of literacy. Through this literature review, I explain the research that I have found on 21st century skills, literacy and multiliteracy, new media, multimodality, and multigenre to further show how these components will position themselves into the study itself.

21st Century Skills

21st century skills is a buzzword heard in education classrooms and professional development around the country. 21st century skills is rhetoric that is driven by business needs in our world. The businesses are growing more technologically advanced as we compete in a global market. As our world and students are changing, so is instruction. Educators have to better prepare students for the ever-changing global world that lies outside of secondary and post-secondary schooling. One way to prepare students for that world, is to move beyond teaching only content in the classroom and focus on the skills that will be necessary for when students enter post-secondary school and the work force.

21st century skills work in conjunction with the content already taught in classrooms to help prepare our students. 21st century skills can be defined as the skills students will utilize in the classroom that encourage them to move beyond just the material they are learning. Alismail and McGuire in their article, “21st Century Standards and Curriculum: Current Research and

Practice,” state, educational pedagogy has centered on preparing “students for college and their future careers” (150). John Stocks states, “as educators prepare students for this new global society, teaching the core content subjects – math, social studies, the arts – must be enhanced by incorporating critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity” (Kivunja 45). One way this has been accomplished is through the implementation of Common Core standards. Common Core State Standards are the newest standards that all public schools in North Carolina, along with many other states and territories in the U.S. are now using to teach students. These standards mostly focus on math and English while other essential standards are used for other core classes. Through the Common Core State Standards, students are required to learn their content in the subject, but there has also been a move to address the 21st century skills necessary for students upon graduation. According to Common Core State Standards Initiative, “The standards are designed to be robust and relevant to the real world, reflecting the knowledge and skills that our young people will need for success in college and careers and be positioned to compete successfully in the global economy” (Alismail and McGuire 151). Common Core standards have worked to integrate academic knowledge with critical thinking and social skills. This view on the standards helps “students master the multi-dimensional abilities required in the 21st century” (Alismail and McGuire 150). Ken Kay states, “the term 21st century skills is not a vague and squishy catchword that can mean anything.” These skills encourage and prepare students for the abilities that they will need to fully be able to demonstrate when they graduate from either high school or college and get careers.

There is a high need for incorporating 21st century skills in education, which is why Common Core now includes the skills into the standards. Kay argues,

[c]ompetency in 21st century skills gives people the ability to keep learning and adjusting to change. Twenty-first century skills are the ticket to moving up the economic ladder.

Without 21st century skills, people are relegated to low-wage, low-skill jobs. Proficiency in 21st century skills is the new civil rights for our times.

Employers want their employees to demonstrate that they can use the 21st century skills of communication, critical thinking, problem solving, innovation, collaboration, and credibility (Andrade 145; Jacobson-Lundeberg 87-89; Kay), which Common Core focuses on when integrating the 3Rs (reading, writing, arithmetic) and the 4Cs (critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity) into the classroom (Alismail and McGuire 15). This push is due to the “interconnectedness of our global economy” where students work with people worldwide and “globalization, economic necessity, and low civic engagement compound the urgency to develop the skills and knowledge they need for success” (Rosefsky Saavedra and Opfer 8). Tony Wagner agrees, stating that students need all of these skills and more. He states students need “critical thinking and problem solving; collaboration and leadership; agility and adaptability; initiative and entrepreneurialism; effective oral and written communication; accessing and analyzing information; and curiosity and imagination” (Rosefsky Saavedra and Opfer 8). These skills are very important because “workforce development literature shows that they [21st century skills] are necessary for student’ success, both in college and careers, in a globalized, high-tech, knowledge-based world” (qtd. in Jacobson-Lundeberg 84).

The 21st century skills outlined below, are designed to help teach content to students while also preparing them with the skills they will need later in life. Many teachers know the content that they teach but defining and teaching the skills becomes the difficult part. The four skills that I am going to be focusing on for my study include: critical thinking, problem solving,

communication, and creativity because they align with the Common Core standards for ninth and tenth grade English, and they are the most cited in the literature. Each skill is extremely important in its own way to help prepare our students for their futures.

The National Council for Excellence in Critical Thinking defines critical thinking “as the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/ or evaluating information gathered;” essentially to be able to critically think, the students need to analyze, interpret, evaluate, synthesize, make judgements and decisions, and solve problems (Alismail and McGuire 152; Kivunja 42). Critical thinking requires students to analyze, evaluate, create, and use the higher order thinking skills. Problem-solving, as defined by Partnership for 21st Century Learning (P21) is reasoning effectively, using systems thinking, making judgments and decisions, and solving problems (Kivunja 42). Both critical thinking and problem solving requires students to “engage in a high level of clarity in stating points for discussion or concerns, exercising orderliness in working on complex issues, exercising a high level of diligence in seeking relevant information, being reasonable in selecting and applying data, persisting with the pursuit of goals even when difficulties are encountered and trying to be as precise as possible” (Kivunja 43). Through critical thinking and problem solving, students are required to think deeply about a topic or problem and if necessary, find a solution. Critical thinking and problem solving move beyond just understanding the information being presented to the student.

Not only is it important to think about the topic or problem, but it is also important to communicate with group members or coworkers and the audience of what is being created. To do this, communication skills are vital. Communication skills include “the ability to articulate thoughts and ideas effectively, both orally and nonverbally, the ability to listen and make sense

of what is being said, the ability to utilize communication effectively, the ability to utilize a wide range of media and related technologies and ability to communicate in different environments” (Kivunja 43). Communication skills are at the center “in the workplace and in public life” (Kivunja 43). Communication skills do not have to be face to face but can be through web tools or messaging that requires interaction between people in order to accomplish a goal. To communicate effectively, students have to be “taught how to articulate thoughts and ideas using oral, written and nonverbal communication skills;” they should understand that “communication can be used for different purposes,” such as “inform clients, to instruct participants, to motivate learners, or to persuade potential customers” (Kivunja 44). In the classroom, this translates into finding the communication skills to work with classmates but also appeal to an audience for the project or text the student is working with. Many of the same principles apply in the classroom that would apply on the job.

Finally, creativity and innovation help to put the thoughts and ideas into action. Creativity and innovation can be defined as “solving problems in new ways;” “inventing new technologies or applications;” and being challenged with “authentic, real-world problems” (Kivunja 45). Creativity and innovation skills used not to be the skills that were focused on the most; however, recently, they have been essential in our global economy due to the workforce demand. Students have to be encouraged to think outside of the box and stretch their imaginations to come up with new and interesting ideas to stay competitive in the market.

Multiliteracy approaches help to implement these 21st century skills into the classroom. It is extremely important for students to have real-world application of skills with activities that are context and inquiry based, cross curricular, and reflective (Carlgren). “Jacobson argued that many technological tools can support different skills such as problem solving, critical thinking,

collaborative learning, and the learning environment” (Alismail and McGuire 153). It has been found that using multimedia tools help to “promote deeper understanding to complete class activities” (Alismail and McGuire 153). The activities that I am looking to include in my classroom will incorporate digital technology through new media and multiliteracies. Some tools and ideas that the Partnership for 21st century learning (P21), a proponent of 21st century skill implementation, suggests using in classrooms trying to implement this, include: creating interdisciplinary tasks for students, sharing student work, teachers and students using and evaluating literature circles through classroom recordings, creating public service announcements or videos and posting them on YouTube, essays, create non-profit organizations to support a cause in one of the novels the students have read, pitch ideas to community members, and more (“Framework for 21st Century Learning”). All of these ideas include reading materials and creating a real-life product for a project that is standard aligned while incorporating skills.

Literacy and Multiliteracy

Composition is a field that focuses on literacy, and it is constantly in a fluctuating state. In the past, composition pedagogy has specifically focused on the value of linguistic text. While linguistic text is still important and should be valued, it is not the only way to teach literacy, especially due to the increasing access to technology and other forms of media that allow for people to understand the world around them in new ways. To be successful today, it is not enough to just be literate in linguistic text, and instead, scholars are pushing for the expansion of the definition of literacy.

Literacy is extremely important because it opens the doors for people to be successful in the world and gives people power, much like the goal of incorporating 21st century skills. In

Shoffner et. al.'s article, "Multiliteracies in the Secondary English Classroom: Becoming Literate in the 21st Century," Scott states, "literacy refers to the idea of being able to look at that text, whatever it is, and extract some sort of meaning from it" (81). Literacy is not limited to just linguistic text. Literacy gives power to people through their ability to analyze the text or media that they are analyzing. James Paul Gee argues that just because you are literate does not mean you are an authority on every subject or have a higher place in society, but instead, you can use literacy as a weapon. Literacy, being able to read and write, allows you to have power where you can better understand and influence the world that is around you. Being able to use the knowledge gained from understanding different forms of media allows a person to fully interact with the people in our global society. In the past, not everyone has had this power or opportunity through writing. Typically, writing as a medium has been valued over speech alone because of the cultural divide, and writing effectively is what gave people power, and some groups were not given that access. Being able to read and write was a privilege, whereas, speech was something almost everyone learned so they could communicate; however, the power did not lie in speech. In the past, women and minorities were kept from becoming as literate as white men, restricting the power they had. "Blacks, Hispanics and Latinos/as, and American Indians, were, for prolonged periods, persecuted for learning to read and write, educated outside the schools that males attended, and denied access to the white colleges and universities" (Selfe 623). Minorities had less power because they could not read and write. Being able to read and write became a mark of superiority and power, and this ideology was reflected in the classrooms.

However, this viewpoint is changing. Now women and minorities have access to the power of being literate because more people than ever have access to schooling where they can become literate, and more value is beginning to be placed on different forms of composing as we

have increased technology and accessibility to different materials. No longer is all of the power held by people who can write linguistically. Bowen and Whithaus state, “what it means to be literate in the world today is changing,” and it is important to “advocate for pedagogical techniques that incorporate approaches where social contexts are considered” (4). Selfe argues that composition teachers

need to pay attention to, and come to value the multiple ways in which students compose and communicate meaning... to meet their own needs in a changing world ... help them make sense of their experiences and lives... learn from their motivated efforts to communicate with each other... represent the rhetorical sovereignty of young people from different backgrounds, communities, colors, and cultures, to observe and understand the rhetorical choices they are making, and to offer them new ways of making meaning, new choices, new ways of accomplishing their goals. (642)

All of the sudden, literacy is not just linguistic writing; instead, literacy is being able to communicate in a variety of ways. Being literate in these new ways of communication provides power. Dawson and Siemen and Cooper et al. both believe that being literate is not just being able to read and write, but it is becoming literate in new forms of media as well, much like Selfe believes the focus of our composition classes should be, where learners have to show their competence not only socially but also technologically (Cooper et al. 94; Dawson and Siemen). Looking at research completed by Nancy Bailey and Kristen Carroll, Collin Brooke, Dawson and Siemens, James Gee, Claire Lauer, Janise Lauer, Cheryl Ball, Jody Shipka, and Cynthia Selfe, students do not benefit from only using print writing. Instead, using print writing in conjunction with other genres and modalities helps students to be creative, think of new sources and new ways of completing tasks, make meaning, and help students take control of their own voice.

We have coined a new term to encompass this new ideology called multiliteracies.

Pilgrim and Martinez define multiliteracies, as an expanded form of literacy, based on the New London Group stating that multiliteracies encompass, “multiple communication forms and a context of cultural and linguistic diversity within a globalized society” (61). Dawson and Siemen argue that “if an expanded form of literacy, multiliteracies, is the key to individual and community wealth and wellbeing with a society, then it is crucial to the value of education to establish measures regarding how well students in the education system are mastering these fundamentals” (285). Selfe, Brooke, and Alexander define multiliteracies as the creation of new texts like multimedias, multiliteracies, multimodalities, and multigenres, alongside traditional linguistic texts, that can draw on different semiotic channels to communicate (C. Lauer; Brooke 178).

Multiliteracy encompasses multimodal and multigenre composing. Through multimodal and multigenre pedagogy, students utilize the forms of literacy that are becoming more and more important as the world’s values change, such as visual, audio, spatial, behavioral, and gestural modes. Cooper et al. state, the multiliteracy pedagogical framework “require[s] transformation to meet the needs of twenty-first-century learners,” and enables students “to become active meaning-makers” (95). As cited in Alismail and McGuire, Wiggins and McTighe state, “researchers pointed out that “multiliteracy” can enable students to make informed decisions that prepare them to face challenges in the global community and give them the opportunity to be successful in the workplace” (151). In multigenre assignments, students are able to create through different genres including, “a variety of static texts, such as books, magazines, labels, and pamphlets... music, art, film, and television” (Pilgrim and Martinez 61), and different modes including, “print, photos, videos, or graphs” (Pilgrim and Martinez 61). Cynthia Selfe believes

that writing through different modalities will help to “provide students the opportunities of developing expertise with all available means of persuasion and expression, so that they can function as literate citizens in a world where communications cross geopolitical, cultural, and linguistic borders” (618). This will give students the power necessary to function in the world.

21st century skills, mentioned in the previous section, also provide a part of literacy. Having these skills will also help with the power students are given. Jacobson-Lundeberg believes that these skills are important for socioeconomically disadvantaged students to feel empowered and succeed in the world, and education should figure out a way to implement these into teaching practices. The 21st century learner is familiar with the use of technology, and we can use this in conjunction with the “traditional goals of composition programs like knowing the audience, doing the research to find evidence for a point of view, and finding the best rhetorical way to communicate the point” (Arms 195). Many students have been using technology since they were little; through new media, we can show students how to use the same technology tools they are used to using already, just for educational purposes.

New Media

In scholarship, new media has many definitions, and it changes throughout history as composition pedagogy evolved. New media can be defined using the primary scholars, Wysocki, Selfe, and Werner. New media is a text, or a “typical digital outcome of multimodal composition,” that is “primarily created in digital environments, composed in multiple media, and designed for presentation and exchange in digital venues” created by “composers who are aware of the range of materialities of texts and who then highlight the materiality” (Werner 718). Cheng-Wen and Archer also describe new media as “the material resource that gives text form” (68). New media is the creation of something new, and it is something defined as having

innovative ways to take material and transform it into something creative that can be shared with many people. The key part for me, is that the product does not have to be digitized at first, but it is able to be put into a digital format at a later time. In new media scholarship, there is an agreement among some scholars where it is assumed that new media only has to utilize digital technology, but that is not always the case. Clair Lauer states that new media can't just be digital media "because any webpage would then be new media." Brooke specifically states new media isn't just about adding technology into a class. When he creates a class with new media, he follows the following principles: New media pedagogy is more than "teaching to the text;" "New media function as a writer's laboratory, a site of experimentation;" New media often operate on "Internet Time" (and so must we); and "New media replace expertise with exploration and engagement" (Brooke 180-182).

New media is important because it demonstrates the cultural shift in what we value in the classroom. Because of new media, literacy becomes very complicated. We now have to define digital literacy as well. Digital literacy is using technology and its affordances to create texts. Digital literacy "is the ability to find, evaluate, utilize, share, and create content using information technologies and the Internet" (Pilgrim and Martinez 64). Technology is the tool we utilize to express what we need to say. However, this really can be done with any new program or tool, even if it is not technology based. New media provides the tools, means, access, and resources to create multimodal and multigenre texts. Shipka defines text including "everything from conventional essays, to paintings, photographs, videos, and hybrids we have yet to image" (11). Many times, new media is finding the correct tools and resources to produce information in new ways that have not been thought of or considered in those lights, and this affordance allows for the multigenre and multimodal texts, digital or not, to be created. New media allows my

classroom to modify current assignments using the tools I now have access to. Through the access to technology, students can transform the way that they create projects and assignments. Instead of creating a PowerPoint, students have access to many other presentation platforms such as Prezi, video recordings, podcasts, interactive web pages, and many other tools. New media helps teachers and students move away from traditional literacy practices because it allows for the creation of products in ways other than linguistic text. Having access to new platforms for creation allow the multimedia and multigenre texts to be created and accessed by a range of people.

Multimodal/ Multimodality

Multimodality is a new way of thinking about how to compose in linguistic, visual, aural, gestural, and spatial ways. The student must consciously think beyond written words to complete tasks where they must manipulate and integrate modes and semiotic resources, taking into account, design and layout, through the digital media platform to help create meaning in a text and let the student and audience consider the importance of different functions and forms (Bowen and Whithaus 7; Chen-Wen and Archer 63). Through multimedia, the author can take media and manipulate it to create meaning for the reader/ listener and create new texts out of something we haven't typically valued as much as we have valued written text. While each definition from scholars is slightly different, multimodalities are linguistic, aural, visual, spatial, and gestural modalities deliberately chosen and used to create meaning and communicate.

As stated in the introduction, many composition classes are not reading and assigning materials in this way. "For many kids, visual texts are more engaging than are written texts," if they have the understandings on how to work with the texts (Kirby and Crovitz 295).

Multimodality helps to accomplish this task. It is something new and exciting in the composition

classroom, but at the same time, these types of texts have been around for a long time. Bowen and Whithaus believe that “multimodal student writing is doing something new – it’s reshaping genre boundaries and changing what counts as academic knowledge” (4). By using texts with multimedia, students are able to see materials in ways other than just words on a page. Because not every student learns in the same way, this is beneficial to students understanding the content they need to learn in the classroom. Each student could essentially learn the same information through the different media options and still be successful in their education. Here the classroom becomes student-centered, focused specifically at what the student needs to be successful beyond the classroom walls. “When we shift the notion of text beyond print on paper or screen to include almost anything that carries meaning and is open to interpretation, our classroom walls become permeable,” Kirby and Crovitz state (279). This idea is in line with changing the expectations of our students. According to Jody Shipka, many students expect that when they walk into the English classroom, the teacher will tell them exactly what they need to do and how it needs to be done. However, through this new framework of thought, that is not the case. Today, students are supposed to be thinking on their own, exploring their own learning, and creating their own opportunities for learning as education moves away from the banking model. Multimodality lets students have the option to choose how they want to compose and how those modes will fit together to create meaning. The teacher can guide the student if they need help, but the rhetorical decision is ultimately the student’s decision.

Shipka believes that multimodal composing is an inquiry-based approach and should be offered to students in order to “bridge the distance between personal and academic discourse aims” instead of using “mechanical fill-in-the-blanks or ‘cookbook’ approach to composing” (284). She states that using this framework will guide students towards increasing their

“rhetorical, material, and methodological flexibility by requiring them to determine the purposes and contexts of the work they produce” (284-285). Through this framework, students will be able to better understand the content and how to compose in modalities that they use every day, except now they are completing this in an academic setting. Through this approach, students are able to direct their own learning and be in charge of how they display what they have learned.

Through multimodal assignments, students are forced not only to think about content but also how they want to present the content. They have to make deliberate rhetorical choices as to the best fit for their arguments or research; therefore, they are learning to critically think more. When students create design assignments “in multi-modalities, other than essays, to demonstrate their understanding of what they [are] reading and reflecting on in their research,” (Arms 197-198) the assignments tend to feel more real and relevant to the students. When students decided which modality: alphabetic, visual, aural, or any combination of the three, to use, they should reflect on their modality to have a better understanding of their own communication (Palmeri 46). By offering the modalities to students, they are able to have the choices that best fit their personal learning and can showcase what they know effectively.

Through multigenre assignments, students can accomplish many different goals: (1) set their own goals for the work they engage in; (2) draw upon a wider range of communicative resources than they have before in different courses; (3) analyze and explain their various choices that have helped them establish their goals for their work; and (4) follow the various ways “in which communicative texts and events shape, and take shape from, the contexts and media in which they are produced and received” (Shipka 299). Multimodal assignments and multimedia technologies also help to incorporate the 21st century skills. Lambert and Cuper state that “multimedia technologies directly promote 21st-century skills, nonlinear thinking, and

reflective practice” (267). One particular example is using visual writing aids such as concept maps that help students think nonlinearly about their subject because they can form connections and use hyperlinks to connect the material they have to other sources. Ultimately, students have to choose the modalities that “best enable them to persuasively present their thoughts to a specific audience” (Palmeri 38). Students have a voice to choose which media communicate their ideas in the best ways. Offering them that choice moves away from the traditional banking model in the classroom and enables the student to take control of their own learning.

Multigenre

In addition, multigenre writing is another way to expand beyond the one form or one type of expression in writing. Looking specifically at the definition of genre, Cheng-Wen and Archer define genre as, “[an] aspect of textual organization – ‘that which realizes and allows us to understand the social relations of the participants in the making, the reception and the reading/interpretation of the text’” (67). Grierson defines genre as a bunch of individual pieces combined together to create meaning. Students get to choose what meaning they want to create through their individual pieces. Pare and Smart argue that genre is “a distinctive profile of regularities across four dimensions: a set of texts, the composing processes involved in creating these texts, the reading practices used to interpret them, and the social roles performed by writers and readers” (qtd. in J. Lauer 116). Genre enables students to create in different ways, marketing each genre piece for a specific purpose and audience. Writing in genres help give students the freedom to create in a way that makes the most meaning to them. By putting the genres together, and making a piece multigenre, students can constantly create new meanings for their intended purpose.

Multigenre texts enable students to have more creative freedom in creating their pieces. For students who don't think multigenre choices are a format that lends themselves to essays, if that is what they prefer to write in, that is not the case. Multigenre assignments let the students pick the genre that will showcase their abilities and serve their specific purpose. The student can choose anything from traditional essays, speeches, articles, poems, case studies, maps, etc. The genres are creative and innovative ways for students to share themselves in their topics. It "emphasizes creativity and de-emphasizes the sequence and linearity which dominate the research paper genre" (Simon 149). Simon found that when her students translated their information into the genres, they "read and wrote across texts in a way that emphasized meaning and application" (162). Both Simon and Cheng-Wen and Archer both agree that by letting students choose their genres, students are given the power and responsibility to choose their resources and make statements about their topics that encourage critical thinking and communication between many different people (Cheng-Wen and Archer 63; Simon 149). "The multigenre paper allows young writers to use their imaginations as they blend facts with imagination through their poetry, short stories, and personal narratives; it is a "multilayered, multivoiced literary experience" (Painter 288). Through these creative genres, there is a way for students to communicate themselves and their ideas. "So strong is the genre effect that using different forms to communicate the same idea will produce different results" (Simon 154). Students are not discouraged from creating traditional texts, but they are encouraged to think beyond and find different ways to express the ideas. Multigenre texts enable students to have more creative freedom because students are forced to find ways to transform their materials. Shipka believes

for students who have grown accustomed to instructors telling them exactly what they need to do, this way of working, having the freedom of choices for composing, can be time-consuming and frustrating, especially when the students discover potentials for enriching their work that may require them to set aside the work they have already begun and return to an earlier stage in the process. (291)

The process requires skills that many students are not used to having to apply, and it forces them to critically think about what they are doing at all times. This option also forces students to think creatively, work with other students, and problem solve, touching on the four main skills that students are being encouraged to master before graduating high school. Multigenre composing makes students expand on what they are used to doing in the classroom and push the boundaries of what has been done in the past.

Many scholars like Grierson believe that thinking about literacy differently than we have in the past opens many doors for the students' experimentation. Cheng-Wen and Archer state, "A move towards a multimodal approach to academic literacies offers students the opportunity to experiment with a range of genres for presenting academic argument. It can also open up prospects for questioning and recognizing the purposes, uses, and affordances of particular genres for argumentation" (67). Devitt argues that you cannot limit the use of genre to only a classroom setting but instead, must look at all its uses in the real-world. I believe that Cheng-Wen and Archer would agree that the experimentation in classes helps students to become more comfortable in future requirements. When students enter the workforce, most of them will not be writing research papers; however, they will be asked to present information in different ways to appeal to each individual audience. Through the multigenre project, students get to practice what will be expected of them when they exit secondary and post-secondary school.

When students transform writing into different genres, they change the rhetorical situation because they have to write for different audiences. Amy Devitt believes that genre is more than just a textual convention, and instead, genre is a rhetorical act (146). Romano states, “Multigenre allows us to ‘meld fact, interpretation and imagination,’ into a series of self-contained pieces... that appear in forms that include poetry, prose, drama, and exposition” (Grierson 51). Grierson, who utilizes multigenre writing in her classroom states, “Multigenre writing has become a powerful complement to the traditional research paper, allowing my students to develop the discipline of organizing their thoughts” (51). Traditional assignments that teachers give can be adapted to fit into the multigenre assignment where students are able to critically think about what they want to present, problem solve a creative solution to present that information, and then creatively showcase the information for their audience. Just as with multimodal composing, multigenre composing offers students options, power, control, and choice.

Self-reflection on these practices is also important. Working with these genres, and making deliberate decisions about the genre being used, “[indicates] a deepened understanding of interconnectedness of theory and practice in course readings” (Rush 211). Students would be able to take the skills they have learned from the genres and apply them to all writing samples they create. Students are forced to critically think and reflect on their practices to ensure they are communicating the information in the best way for their audience while also gaining an understanding of the genre that they are working with.

Conclusion

“Research shows that today’s digital students learn more when engaged in meaningful, relevant, and intellectually stimulating schoolwork and that the use of technology can increase

the frequency for this time of learning” (Lambert and Cuper 265). Combining literacy with multiliteracy skills, 21st century skills, and the affordances of new media tools, we can help our students find a deeper understanding in their work. Leland, et. Al., Smagoriskyl and Coppock, and White conclude that, “by valuing the literacy work involved in reading multimodal texts... teachers can create classroom contexts that challenge the marginalization of our students’ literacy skills that occur when only academic print genres are valued” (qtd. in Simon 158). Through the skills needed to create multimodal and multigenre texts, student learn and utilize 21st century skills, Simon found. For students to be successful, they need “both content knowledge and skills to apply and transform their knowledge for useful and creative purposes and to keep learning as content and circumstances change” (Kay). Instruction must utilize content and skills for students to be successful.

Through the English classroom, teachers are able to push against traditional educational pedagogy and composition practice by including multiliterate assignments. Kirby and Crovitz state, English teachers, “have the ability to bring dimension, curiosity, immediacy, and relevanc[ce] to the traditional materials by ... introducing our students to new forms of writing” (279). Lambert and Cuper argue that multimedia is a great tool to teach 21st century skills. They state that nonlinear multimedia tools are able to provide creative, digital-age reflection opportunities and “directly promote 21st- century skills, non linear thinking, and reflective practice” (Lambert and Cuper 267-268).

The research still raises questions about 21st century skills, multimodal, and multigenre assignments, such as: How do multimodal and multigenre assignments utilize 21st century skills? Do students and teachers agree that multimodal and multigenre assignments help teach these skills, or it is just in theory? Which 21st century skills are utilized the most in these types

of assignments, and which skills lend themselves the best to these assignments? The next chapter describes how I attempted to explore these questions through my study.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

This research study focused specifically on measuring the perceptions of the effectiveness of multiliterate assignments incorporating 21st century skills into the high school English classroom. This research was designed to understand: how student and teachers believe multiliterate assignments impact students' ability to utilize 21st century skills; how those 21st century skills are present in multiliterate assignments; and what effects the use of 21st century skills have on the mastery of course content.

Design Framework

In the United States, the government and policy makers are pushing for classrooms to become literate in 21st century skills that will prepare students to be successful in jobs or post-secondary school. When researching, the following 21st century skills were cited by post-secondary institutions and businesses as the essential skills that students needed to possess when entering that institution: critical thinking, communication, creativity, and problem solving (Envision). The implementation of Common Core standards, the one-to-one initiative, where all students have access to a technological device, the implementation of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) programs, and problem-based learning (PBL) programs are just a few of the ways that they country is pushing teachers to help students become literate in the 21st century skills necessary for the future.

How do you incorporate 21st century skills into an English classroom specifically? New types of assignments and projects have to be implemented, if you are not already teaching these skills. Multiliterate assignments, previously examined in the literature review, seemed to utilize many of the different skills that teachers are supposed to be incorporating into the classroom.

Research indicated that many post-secondary classrooms are using these assignments and texts to teach their students. If teachers are preparing students for the post-secondary classroom, and for career and life skills, then these assignments may help to teach these skills as well. I wondered if I began to see the correlation, how would students and other teachers view the assignments? Would students and teachers also view multiliterate assignments as a way to incorporate 21st century skills into the classroom?

This study implemented a qualitative approach. Qualitative approaches focus on “exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” by going through the process of “emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant’s setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data” (Creswell 4). Taking a qualitative approach to completing this study, I used a constructivist worldview in my research approach. “Social constructivists believe that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work” (Creswell 8). Measuring perceptions helps to show how those participants understand the world around them. In this study, the world around the participants is the classroom.

This study’s focus was to measure perceptions, more specifically to gain insight into how the teachers and students of the school felt multiliterate assignments incorporated the 21st century skills. The approach used was to focus on how the students and teachers felt about the assignments in general and if the assignments were useful to incorporate skills instead of just focusing on whether or not those skills were incorporated. The study implemented open-ended survey questions in order to gauge perceptions of the participants. The open-ended questions used in the study help the researcher to gain insight into what the participant actually wants to

say versus giving him or her very specific choices where his or her opinion and voice may not show. Since open-ended questions were used, the researcher assessed how the participants felt about where they work and the feelings about the work that they completed. Students and teachers were given time to reflect on the questions without being forced to think about the answer in a pre-determined way. This provided the opportunity to really understand how the participants felt and what perceptions or misconceptions they had. In the end, this approach specifically provided data on what the students and teachers thought of the assignments and how they thought about the problem itself.

Process

IRB Process

My first step was to create the research questions that would guide the study. My research asked the following questions:

- How do students and teachers believe that multiliterate assignments impact a student's ability to utilize 21st century skills effectively, if at all?
- How are 21st century skills utilized in multiliterate assignments?
- What effects do utilizing 21st century skills in multiliterate assignments in helping with the mastery of content?

The next step was to decide on participants. Since qualitative research requires the researcher to collect participant meanings, bring personal values into the study, study the context or setting of the participants, and collaborate with the participants, working with my own students gave me the participants that I needed (Creswell 18). I chose to work with both my ninth and tenth grade English classes. Having the two different grade levels allowed me to have a range of participants and detect if the types of assignments that I used in the study had similar

results in different classes. Using my own students was beneficial to completing the qualitative study. If I had worked with other classes or another school, I may not have been able to get to know the participants, which contributed to the culture; I may not have been able to observe how the study proceeded; I may not have been able to collaborate with the participants either. Due to using my own students, I introduced the texts and assignments and I monitored that the surveys were completed on time, which gave me the ability to be present and involved with the study. I also chose to work with the English department, the media center coordinator, and the STEM coordinator. I was able to work closely with these participants also.

For the actual study, I had to create assignments for my students to complete and for teachers to assess and then answer questions about. The teacher participants would not do anything with the assignments except evaluate them in regard to the survey questions. I created two different assignments, one multimodal and one multigenre for each class (two for ninth grade and two for tenth grade), for a total of four assignments. The assignments were based off of the following texts: *Romeo and Juliet* (9th), *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* (9th), *Julius Caesar* (10th), and *The Epic of Gilgamesh* (10th). All students in my class would read these texts together and then complete the assignments. I specifically chose two texts that were Shakespearean dramas because students often time have difficulty reading and interpreting Shakespeare, and through this project, students were given many opportunities to show their understanding of the different parts of the play, even if they did not understand every word. I chose *The Absolute True Diary of a Part Time Indian* and *The Epic of Gilgamesh* because both of these texts deal with themes that students still understand in their own world today. By creating the multimodal assignment, students can showcase how they solve real-world problems regarding these themes. Two of the assignments were completed in groups (*The Absolutely True*

Diary of a Part Time Indian and The Epic of Gilgamesh) and two of the assignments were completed individually (*Romeo and Juliet* and *Julius Caesar*). These assignments were each designed to incorporate the 21st century skills that were being measured in the surveys.

Each assignment had a pre and post survey, a reflection piece for the students, and a survey for the teachers. The students viewed the assignments, completed the pre-survey, completed the assignments, completed the post-survey, and completed a reflection prompt. Only the students participating in the study had to complete the surveys and reflection assignment, but all students were required to complete the projects. The participating teachers viewed the assignment descriptions and completed one survey about the four different assignments. Surveys are a way for the researcher to ask questions to the participants in lieu of doing interviews. Working in a school with children that mostly cannot drive, conducting interviews would have been extremely difficult and would have limited the number of participants. In addition, teachers are typically busy, and these participants did not have a planning period that aligned with mine. Conducting the surveys provided a way for students and teachers to voice their opinions in a timely manner, anonymously, and without having restrictions to the researcher, like interviews may have had. The surveys can be found in Appendix B.

This information was then drafted into my IRB application and submitted. The application was approved for me to complete the study on my own students and the teachers that I work with at the school I teach at, provided that all information remains anonymous and private, being destroyed at the end of the study. Students and teachers were also not offered any compensation for completing the study.

Participants

The next step was to acquire the participants. I introduced the study to my students in February. The students were instructed that to participate, they had to get the form signed by a parent or guardian. I initially had ten students who agreed to participate and ended with only seven participating. One student was removed from my class and would not be able to complete the necessary assignments; one student dropped out of school; and one student decided they no longer wanted to participate. The school where the research was conducted at only has a population of 560 students. In total, I taught only 80 of those students this semester. The sample size that I had to work with was extremely low to begin with. Another factor may have been the unfamiliarity of the parents with higher education and research studies. Due to the unfamiliarity of what the study may have involved, student participation may have been low as well because the parents were required to sign off on the study for their child to participate. A few other reasons participation may have been low is that I taught mostly fourteen to sixteen year old students, and some were not willing to participate or take the paper home to get it signed by a parent. The last reason for low participation may have been because the students did not want to do extra work without any compensation, which was not possible due to my role as their teacher as well as the researcher. To inform parents about the study being conducted, I sent home a letter with the students, emailed, called the parents that didn't have an email on file, and when I sent home progress reports that had to be signed, there was a message about the study as well.

To obtain my teacher participants, I asked my entire department, the media coordinator, and the STEM coordinator to complete the survey. That would have been a total of six teachers to complete the survey, but three of the teachers did not sign the consent form and complete the survey within the time frame allotted, so I only had three teacher participants.

Surveys and Assignments

The next part was to create the surveys and the assignments that I gave to the students to complete and teachers to review. The following assignments were created. The actual assignment description can be found in Appendix C.

For *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* novel, ninth grade students had to complete the multimodal assignment in small groups. Students were required to create an anti-bullying campaign that would be marketed to be implemented in the county. Students had to research all aspects of bullying and bullying prevention, make an anti-bullying video, and choose from one other mode of information sharing. Their options for their choice modality included posters, a pamphlet, a picture book, an informational video, letters written to school board for change, programs for the school to initiate, or another option approved by me. The goal for this assignment was to understand the novel and its themes, then take the bullying theme and create a real-life application of how to help students, like the main character in the novel, combat all types of bullying. The assignment not only encouraged creativity, but students had to learn how to take information and present it in different modes that would appeal to different audiences.

The *Romeo and Juliet* project was a multigenre project that incorporated four different parts. Students had to read the play and complete the parts as they were reading and analyzing. The four parts included writing a journal for each act from the perspective of either Romeo, Juliet, or the Nurse, re-writing a scene from the play in everyday English, writing a monologue from the perspective of one of the parents of either Romeo or Juliet about the secret marriage, and a formal critical essay on one of six topics. Through this project, students should have been able to demonstrate their understanding of the play, the characters, and the connection to their lives through creative genres.

The tenth grade *Julius Caesar* project is a multigenre project much like the *Romeo and Juliet* project the ninth graders completed. The students had to read and analyze the play as they were completing the assignment. The assignment had four parts: creating a news article about the death of Caesar, creating a character profile of a good Roman citizen, writing a speech to be given at Brutus' funeral from the perspective of Anthony, and a formal, critical essay on one of the possible topics. Again, students had to be able to understand the play, understand elements of rhetoric, understand characteristics of Roman citizens, and be able to write in the different genres effectively.

The Epic of Gilgamesh project was a multimodal assignment that students completed in groups after reading *Gilgamesh*. There were two main parts to the completion of this assignment. The first part, students had to create their own epic. They started by creating a character profile, wrote the quest the character goes on (using the elements of the epic hero cycle), and illustrated the character. The second part of the project, students had to create a movie trailer for *Gilgamesh*. The goal was for students to be able to demonstrate their understanding of the epic itself, through the trailer, understanding of epic heroes, and their understanding of the epic hero cycle.

When creating these assignments, it was important to ensure from my point of view that at least two of the four 21st century skills outlined in the study should have been needed to complete the assignment to ascertain if the students understood the purpose of why I created the assignments. I wanted to know on my end that I felt the skills had been incorporated in order to measure what other teachers and the students perceived fully. I could use their answers to compare what I thought was used in the assignments for part of my research data.

As I created these assignments, I felt the following skills should have been perceived in the survey responses. With the *Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* multimodal project, students should have needed communication, problem solving, critical thinking, and creativity. The *Romeo and Juliet* multigenre project should have fostered the skills of critical thinking and creativity. The *Julius Caesar* multigenre project should have required the use of critical thinking and creativity. For the *Gilgamesh* multimodal project, students should have used communication, critical thinking, and creativity.

Based on the assignments above, the surveys and reflection assignments were created. The surveys combine open-ended and one choice questions. The questions for the pre-student survey were:

1. What is the assignment?
2. What skills do you think you will need to complete this assignment?
3. What skill do you believe is the most important in this assignment?
4. In one sentence, what do you believe is the hardest part of this assignment.
5. In one to two sentences, what do you think you will take away from this project?

The post-student survey questions included:

1. What assignment did you complete?
2. What skills did you need to complete the assignment?
3. What skill was the most important to complete this assignment?
4. What was the hardest part of this assignment?
5. What did you take away from this project?

The students also had to complete a reflection assignment where they answered the following questions in a paragraph:

1. What was your process in creating this assignment?
2. What challenges did you have with creating this project?
3. What did you learn about the process?
4. How did creating your project prepare you for the work you may do in later classes or after high school.

It is important for every student to understand exactly what each skill that is being measured is. On the surveys, the following definitions were given to the students and teachers to frame the way that they thought about the 21st century skills.

- Critical thinking: analyzing, interpreting, evaluating, synthesizing, making judgments and decisions, and solving problems.
- Problem solving: making decisions and finding a solution to a problem that affects you or the world around you.
- Communicating- giving and receiving feedback from peers or other team members in order to perform a common task.
- Creativity: “solving problems in new ways;” “inventing new technologies or applications;” and be challenged with “authentic, real-world problems.” I had three surveys to create and one reflection to create.

The teacher survey was a little more in-depth because they only completed one survey.

The questions on the teacher participant survey included:

1. Looking at the two multigenre projects, which skills do you think these assignments will encourage students to analyze?
2. Looking at the two multimodal projects, which skills do you think these assignments will encourage students to analyze?

3. Multigenre projects: what do you think the students will learn in creating this assignment?
4. Multimodal: what do you think the students will learn in creating this assignment?
5. Multigenre: how do you think these assignments fit with both content and incorporating 21st century skills (critical thinking, problem solving, communicating, Creativity)?
6. Multimodal projects: how do you think these assignments fit with both content and incorporating 21st century skills (critical thinking, problem solving, communicating, creativity)?
7. Multigenre assignment: what 21st century skill is the most important in creation of these projects?
8. Multimodal assignment: what 21st century skills is the most important in creation of these projects?

It was understood that when teachers answered these survey questions, they knew the Common Core standards for ninth and tenth grade English, they understood what 21st century skills were, and they had a basic understanding of the texts that the assignments paired with. Through this understanding, the teachers were able to answer the questions thoroughly.

Implementation

Finally, it came time to start the study in my classroom. The first assignment I gave was the multimodal anti-bullying assignment, that went with *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part Time Indian* novel, to my ninth grade class, and the multigenre *Julius Caesar* project to my tenth grade class. In each class we read the text associated with the assignments. At the beginning of the assignments, the students were given the pre- survey through a secure Google Doc. After the

assignments were over, the students were given the post- survey, and they had to write the reflection.

The next assignments that were introduced were the multigenre *Romeo and Juliet* project to my ninth grade class and the multimodal *Gilgamesh* project to my tenth grade class. Again, before the student completed the assignment they took the pre-survey and after they finished the assignment they took the post-survey and completed the reflection questions. The teacher surveys were distributed at the end of March and they had until the first week of May to complete the survey through a secure Google Doc.

After the surveys were completed, I took the data and analyzed it. To analyze the pre and post survey data, I took the answers from the Google Document and put them in a spreadsheet. I divided the data into the multigenre assignment and the multimodal assignment, and for each assignment I used the same analysis practice. I looked at the first two questions on the survey together and made notes of how many times each skill was mentioned by the participants for each class, the ninth and tenth grade. For the third and fourth questions, I first looked for common themes throughout the answers, and I also assigned 21st century skills to the theme, if the student did not state a 21st century theme in their answer, when it was applicable. I then compared the pre and post survey data for each assignment and question trying to find any similarities in what the student expected at the beginning of the assignment and what the student perceived at the end of the assignment. To analyze the reflection assignment data, I compiled all of the answers to the paragraphs and again divided the answers into the multimodal and multigenre assignments. I looked for common themes from each assignment and made notes of any mention to 21st century skills and content. To analyze the teacher survey data, I gathered the responses from the secure Google Document and separated the multimodal and multigenre

answers. I then looked at each question's answer finding common themes throughout the results. When applicable, I labeled any correlating themes to the 21st century skill being measured. The results of the data can be found in the next chapter.

Chapter 4: Results and Analysis

Students in each of my classes were required to complete two assignments, one multigenre and one multimodal assignment. These assignments were the summative assessments after reading texts that were part of our curriculum. The ninth grade class read *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* and *Romeo and Juliet*. The tenth grade class read *Julius Caesar* and *The Epic of Gilgamesh*. Students took a pre-survey and a post-survey based on each assignment, and students also wrote a reflection paragraph to give data. The teachers viewed each of these assignments and answered their own surveys.

Multimodal Data

This was the second time I had ever implemented either of the multimodal assignments in the classroom. *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part Time Indian* assignment was at first met with reluctance, but once the students became engaged, they were very excited to complete the project. This group of students were so invested in their product, that they begged me to give them a one-day extension on their projects to complete because they wanted to make sure that everything looked perfect in their videos they created. I saw the students becoming extremely invested in the product they created, and their enthusiasm showed through their work.

The Epic of Gilgamesh project was not received or completed with as much enthusiasm. The students completing this assignment were very apprehensive. They complained the entire time through the project completion, and they did not have the passion that the ninth grade students did about their multimodal project. While *The Absolutely True Diary of Part-Time Indian* is extremely relatable and easy to understand, *The Epic of Gilgamesh* is not as easy. *Gilgamesh* is an old epic with difficult language, and even though the themes are relevant, the students look at the language and they are not enticed by the story. However, with *The Absolutely True Diary*, students are instantly drawn in by the relatable characters, language,

setting, and plot. It makes sense that the students were less excited about the *Gilgamesh* project, and their work may have been less polished because of their interest.

Pre-Survey

The students completed a pre-survey for the two multimodal projects, the *Absolutely True Diary of a Part Time Indian* and *The Epic of Gilgamesh*. Both projects required students to create videos, and they had to write the other portions of the project. In the pre-survey, the student participants believe that all four skills (critical thinking, problem solving, communication, and creativity) would be needed to complete the projects. However, according to the survey, the two most important skills potentially needed were problem solving and creativity, as seen in figure 1. When asked what the hardest part of the assignment would be, there are three main themes that run throughout the survey answers: coming up with the ideas and actually creating it, being comfortable working effectively in a group with people you don't

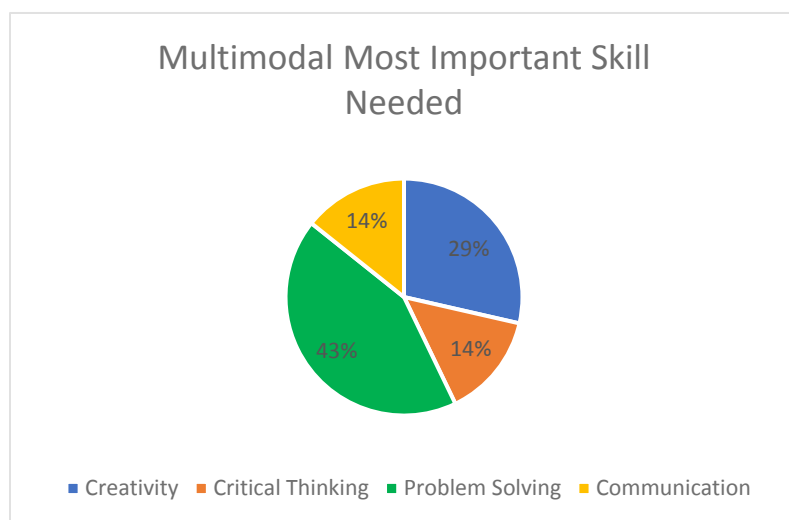


Figure 1: Multimodal Most Important Skill Needed Pre-Survey

know, and being able to appeal to the audience of the project. For example, one student stated, “the hardest part of the assignment is communicating because some people don’t always feel comfortable enough about being bullied.” Another student stated, “communicating with group

members and all agreeing on one idea for the epic hero and his backstory/ struggles” was stated as the hardest. Communication is one key skill that the students noted they needed to have to

complete this project though this question. Another student said deciding on a topic was the hardest, while another student equally said, “having good creativity and making sure everything sums up and make sense.” Finally, one student said, making the trailer would be the hardest part of this assignment. Students showed that they had to use creativity skills as well to complete this assignment, which follows along with the data from question one showing they would need communication and creativity to complete the assignment. Students did not answer in this question that critical thinking was a difficult part. It could be argued students needed problem solving to figure out how to be creative in their projects, so that skill is also shown in both question one and three. The final question on the survey asked the participants what they believe they will take away from the project. 33% of participants cited that they will have gained knowledge of how to be more creative because of this project. Another 33% of participants said they will know how to communicate effectively with other group members, and 22% of participants believe that they will better be able to understand bullying, the effects of bullying, and how to stop bullying because of the project. Finally, 12% of participants cited that creating solutions to a problem is something they will take away.

From the student perspective, the multimodal assignments fostered the 21st century skills of creativity and communication the most out of their answers. The other two answers were problem solving and content connection. Noting that many students thought creativity would leave a lasting impact is important because creativity is an important skill when going to work in the real world. Partnership for 21st Century Learning (P21), states that this learning and innovation skill, along with critical thinking, communication, and collaboration, is “essential to prepare students for the future,” and having these skills helps “separate students who are prepared for a more and more complex life and work environments in the 21st century, and those

who are not” (“Framework for 21st Century Learning”). There were also some students who believed that communication would be an important take-away in the completion of this project. Since students worked in groups, the students had to communicate with each other. Students also had to communicate with the intended audience of the project. Communication is valued in two ways through 21st century skills.

Post-Survey

In the post student survey, the students believe that all four skills needed to be used to complete the project, but the most important skill that was utilized in the completion of the project was creativity, as seen in figure 2 below. When asked what the hardest part of

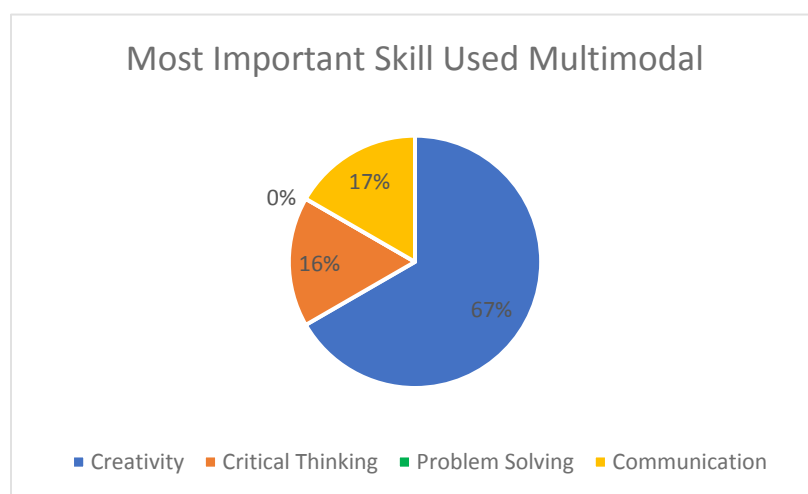


Figure 2: Most Important Skill Used Multimodal Post-Survey

completing the assignment was, the responses included: “sharing the information where everyone can understand” and making it “enjoyable not cheesy,” convincing the audience to buy in to the completed product, coming up with a good and new

idea for the video and actually making it, and figuring out how to effectively complete the assignment. The main categories for this assignment include problem solving, as seen in the responses of “sharing the information where everyone can understand,” convincing the audience to buy in to the completed product, making the product, and completing the assignment, and creativity, as seen in the responses of making it “enjoyable not cheesy,” and coming up with a good and new idea for the video, which is more focused than in the pre-survey. The participants

were asked what did they take away from this project. The results included, being able to share ideas effectively, “edit and combine videos,” and “creativity and communication skills.” Many participants responded with content area take-aways including these three participants that stated: “there are many types of bullying;” “bullying is a bigger problem than we thought, and we all need to work together to stop bullying;” and “small things can really hurt peoples feelings even if you don’t think it will.”

In the students’ individual responses, they focused a lot on creativity with the project itself and being able to communicate with their audience. The ninth grade students felt that their projects required them to think about bullying in a way that they had not before because they had to show their understanding of the effects of bullying to their audience. Through this, the students also showed their understanding of the content through their answers.

Post-Assignment Reflection

The student participants also completed a post-assignment reflection. For the multimodal projects, some participants felt that they struggled with appealing to their audiences and creating an effective product. For example, one participant stated, “Our biggest challenge in creating the project would be persuading the bullies to stop doing what they’re doing. We weren’t persuasive enough to stop all bullies.” Another participant stated, “some challenges by doing this project is that we had to choose a proper way to show the situation without offending anyone.”

Participants felt that to complete the project, they needed time management, which is one of the 21st century skills, just not one that was being focused on in this study. A student stated, “The thing I learned most about the process is that you have to make the best of your time and get as much as you can get done at one time. It prepared me for working harder and getting more done in a certain time frame and actually getting work done.” While another student stated, “some

challenges we had in creating this project was running out of time... it has prepared by teaching me that the work will be hard and take time to complete and that might take up some of my time I would use at home.” Students also felt that they learned and had a better understanding of video creation, including recording, editing, and publishing quality videos. Finally, some participants felt that they were able to accomplish coming up with new and creative ideas. These responses are reflective of the skills of creativity, problem solving, and critical thinking.

Teacher Survey

The teachers also completed a survey about the assignments the student participants completed. All participants agreed that the multimodal assignments created an opportunity for students to utilize all four 21st century skills: critical thinking, problem solving, communication, and creativity. The teachers each believed that students would have to use a wide range of skills to complete the two projects. When asked what the students would learn by creating this project, either the anti-bullying project or the *Gilgamesh* project, the participants stated that students would “learn digital competencies,” “to compose information in different formats and how to use different means to persuade their audience,” and “use technology and to create a usable project.” These responses do not address the 21st century skills being measured by the study, but they point to the fact that these assignments are multimodal in what they are asking students to do and that students will learn to use technology, which will be beneficial to them in their post-graduate lives.

The participants were asked how the project enables students to use the 21st century skills and still learn content. One participant stated that for students to be successful, they must be able to “research, organize, evaluate, and communicate” all while using technology to create a product. This lends itself to a technology component but also critical thinking and problem

solving skills. Other participants stated it was important for the students to communicate with each other and their audience. The last participant stated that “these projects require the use of 21st century skills.” Through these responses, critical thinking, problem solving, and communication are all established in this assignment from a teacher’s perspective. However, creativity was not a component that the teachers listed, even though the students in their survey results above did. When asked what the most important 21st century skill the students needed to complete this project, two-thirds stated that problem solving was the most important skill and one-third stated that communicating was the most important skill, as seen in figure 3.

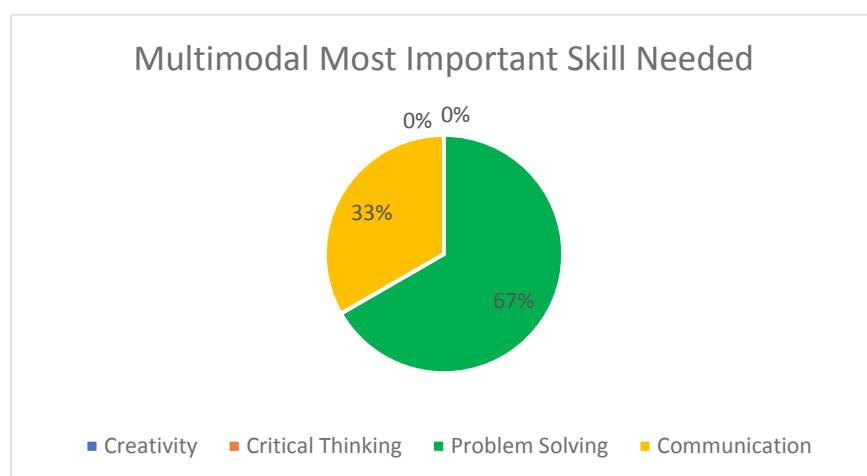


Figure 3: Multimodal Most Important Skill Needed Teacher Survey

The teachers and students had a differing analysis of the assignments, which is understandable considering the contexts in which each participant viewed these assignments from. The students focused more on creativity and communication in their responses whereas the teacher participants focused more on problem solving and communication. The teachers also mentioned that technology was an important component to completing this assignment, and none of the student responses stated that technology played an important factor. One reason for this may be that students are used to using technology in their day-to-day lives during school, and the teachers most likely grew up in a time where technology was not a main focus in school, so the

teachers focused on the technology when the students didn't. Students focused on the fact that they needed to have time management to complete this project successfully, yet the teachers did not mention time management at all. Part of this may be due to the fact that the students completed the assignment, while the teacher participants did not, so the teachers did not have to experience the time component of this assignment. This data does show that for a multimodal assignment, some 21st century skills were necessary to be able to complete the assignment.

Multigenre Data

I had taught *Romeo and Juliet* and this multigenre project before; it was the inspiration for this research; however, I had never taught *Julius Caesar* or completed the *Julius Caesar* project with a set of students before this research study. In the past, students have loved the *Romeo and Juliet* project; they said it helped them to understand the play more. I saw them expressing their own personal opinions about the plot and characters. I also saw them engaging with the play on a personal note, even though reading Shakespeare is quite difficult. However, this semester, when I implemented this project, the students were not as invested as I had seen them before. The students were reluctant to complete the different parts of the assignment, and I did not see the investment that I had seen in the past. Part of the reason may have been because we were getting close to the end of the semester when we completed the project; I have never completed it so late in the semester before. Another reason may be that this group of students just struggled with Shakespeare. I noticed the same level of engagement with the *Julius Caesar* project that I did with the *Romeo and Juliet* project. The students were worried about the project completion and the quality of their work. They were exposed to new genres they had never written in. Sometimes creating in new genres seemed to stress them out, and it showed in their working process that they were uncomfortable.

Pre- Survey

When completing the multigenre assignments, which includes the *Romeo and Juliet* project and the *Julius Caesar* project, only one student participant thought problem solving would be used, but the other three skills (critical thinking, creativity, communication) each were stated as being used to complete the project. Every participant thought that critical thinking was the most important skill that would need to be utilized in the completion of the project, as seen in figure 4.

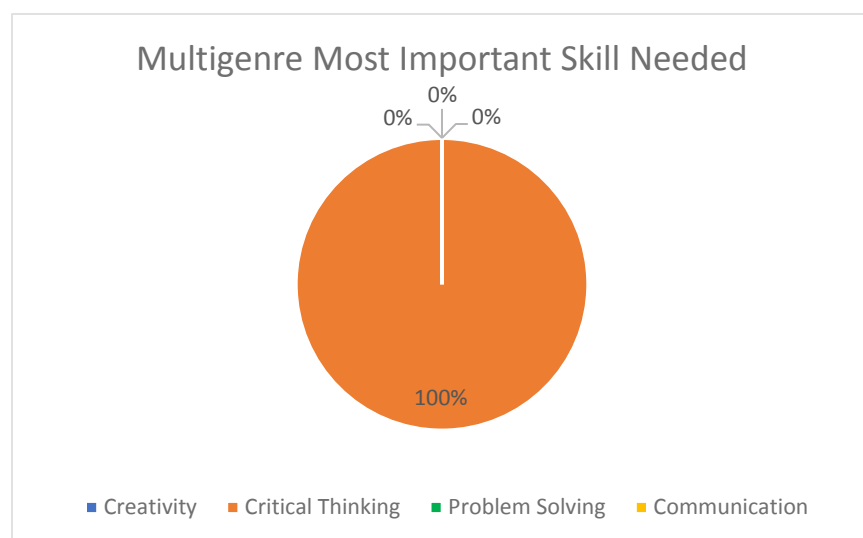


Figure 4: Multigenre Most Important Skill Needed Pre-Survey

When asked what the hardest part of the assignment would be to complete, participants stated, “putting all of the information we gathered from the play into an article that resembles a news article and makes sense;”

“writing;” “reading;” “journals;” “understanding the feelings in the story;” and “judging the entire playing and its characters to write an essay on a topic that requires critical thinking.” Many students thought that understanding the play and creating the different genres would be the hardest part, which is basically the entire assignment; however, each student varied in what genre they thought would be the hardest part. These themes relate back creativity and critical thinking to complete this assignment. When asked what the participants would take away from the assignment, the responses included: “improve my critical thinking;” “easier learning critical thinking;” learn how to do critical thinking better and I will be able to have more creative thoughts;” how to create a diary entry/journal entry. I will know how to do critical thinking

better;” “how to solve problems. I also think I can learn to be more patient;” “when I voice my opinion I need to think about how it affects others;” and “critical thinking skills that came from deeply evaluating the play.” The majority of the participants said that critical thinking skills would be what they took away. Students were told at the beginning of the survey critical thinking included analyzing, interpreting, evaluating, synthesizing, making judgments and decisions, and solving problems. As the researcher, and the teacher, based on questions three and four, and the definition of critical thinking given to the students, I assume this means reading and understanding the play enough to complete the assignments and understanding the genre requirements enough to effectively complete the different parts of the assignment.

Post-Survey

The post-survey results from the multigenre projects is one survey short. One student that

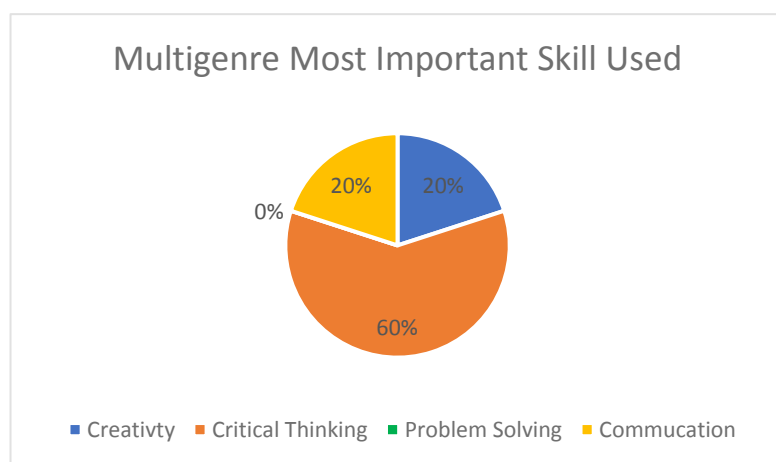


Figure 5: Multigenre Most Important Skill Used Post-Survey

completed the *Julius Caesar* project did not complete the post-survey. When completing the multigenre project, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Julius Caesar*, that was completed on an individual basis, the students thought they used the

skills of critical thinking and creativity, but according to the students, the most important skill needed to complete this assignment was critical thinking, which is the same as the pre-survey.

This can be seen in figure 5. When asked what the hardest part of completing the assignment was, there were many varied answers. Student responses included: “my own story;” “deeply evaluating the play to answer the question whose fault is everything in the play;” “understanding

all parts of the play;” “the monologue;” and “writing the journals from another persons perspective was the hardest, if you aren’t them it is hard because you don’t how they really feel.” The main themes included understanding and evaluating the content, completing the different components of the project they didn’t have experience with, and writing in a different perspective than first person on their assignments. The skills the students thought were the hardest when completing this assignment included critically thinking about the play, being creative with each genre, and problem solving. When asked what the participants took away from the assignment, participants said, “writing skills,” understanding and being able to write from a character’s point of view, summarizing texts, “nothing;” and “focus on what you are doing and think hard.” The student responses showed they learned a lot about how to write in different genres through this project, and they had to critically think about the play content itself to effectively complete the requirements for the genres.

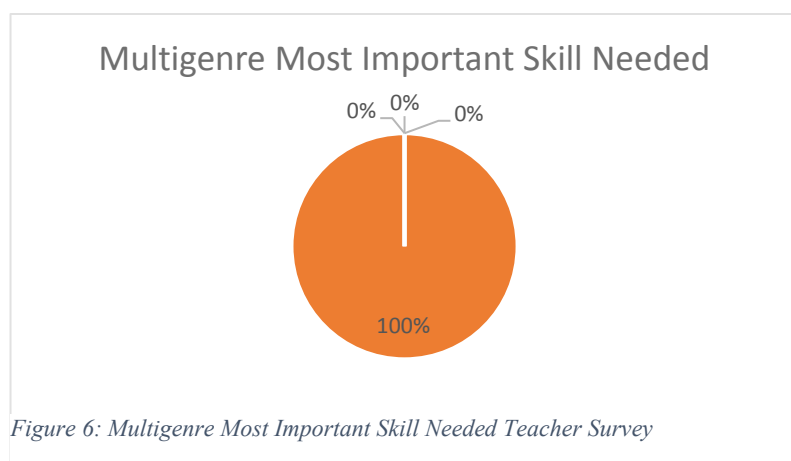
Post-Assignment Reflection

The students also completed a post-assignment reflection. For the multigenre projects, all participants agreed that it was extremely important to be able to fully understand and evaluate the play before beginning work on the assignment. One participant stated, “I learned from this assignment that if you want to have a better project, you first need to understand it [the play] to its entirety.” Another student stated, “My process in creating this assignment was to first make sure I completely understood the play before I started on anything.” Some participants also stated that creating the different genres was a challenge because they had to think about the same play in different ways to fulfill the requirements for the assignment. Two participants stated that a lot of planning needed to be involved when completing the assignment so that they knew how much time and work needed to be put in for the final product to be well done.

Teacher Survey

The teachers also analyzed the multigenre assignments. For the multigenre assignments, the majority of the participants felt that creativity, communication, and critical thinking were all skills students needed to complete the assignments effectively; however, they did not list problem solving, which agrees with the student surveys. When asked what students will learn from these assignments, the participants stated, “students will learn Shakespeare prose along with 21st Century Skills;” “will learn to look at literature and create contemporary projects using different media literacies, a variety of rhetorical devices, and multiple perspectives;” and “learn to simplify/ modernize texts, to write effective essays, to understand/ produce dramatic monologues, to empathize with characters.” These responses include the themes of using multiple genres and its requirements, understanding the text itself, and writing skills. Essentially, for students to be successful, they needed to understand the content of the play and then be able to transform the material into different genres to show their understanding, which is the goal of the assignment.

When asked how these projects utilize the 21st century skills while teaching content, the participants stated, “the assignments incorporate analyzing and evaluating evidence, arguments, making claims and evaluating beliefs; solve different kinds of problems in using the engineering



design process aligned with content knowledge;” “allow students to look at content from literature and think critically and creativity to put a contemporary spin on the literature. It gives

them a chance to show their understanding in a variety of ways;” and “require the use of 21st century skills.” The participants agreed that students would need to analyze, evaluate, make claims, solve problems, thinking critically, and be creative when incorporating the information from the text into the creating of the genres of the project. Finally, when asked what is the most important skill needed to complete this assignment, all participants agreed that students had to be able to critically think, which is in conjunction with the post-student survey. This can be seen in figure 6. Critical thinking is the skill that stands out the most when looking at both teacher and student responses about the assignment.

Analysis

The surveys provided perspectives from both teachers and students as to if multimodal and multigenre assignments help to teach content and skills, but they were unable to fully answer the research questions. Instead, the surveys provided insights as to some of the skills that were used to complete the assignments. When looking at the differences between the pre and post surveys, student participants thought that 21st century skills would be important to the completion of the project during the pre-survey, but in the post-survey it is evident that the students felt that they could not have completed the assignments without using 21st century skills. Specifically, in the multimodal assignments, the students agreed that they had to use creativity and problem solving to complete these projects. The anti-bullying project was the multimodal assignment where the participants felt that they took the content away the most. The surveys helped to show that whether the students realized it or not in the beginning, the projects integrated the use of skills. For the multimodal assignment, students thought they would use problem solving the most, but in the post-survey, students didn't cite problem solving as a skill that was used. In the multimodal pre-survey students did not mention the content in their survey responses, but they did mention that they would take content away in their post-surveys. In the

post-survey, the data shows that the projects are great at utilizing the skills of creativity, problem solving, and critical thinking, but that communication was not prioritized in the survey results. In the multigenre project, it is clear why communication was not as valued because this project was done on an individual basis; however, in the multimodal project, students had to effectively communicate with the people in their group to have an effective project completed. The different assignments, multigenre versus multimodal, can help utilize different skills so the students have access to a wide variety of skills throughout the course.

Through the teacher surveys, I found a skill was taught that I was not measuring the effectiveness or use of, and that is the digital or technology component. Partnership for 21st century learning states, “today we live in a technology and media-suffused environment” and “[t]o be effective in the 21st century, citizens and workers must be able to create and effectively utilize information, media, and technology” (“Framework for 21st Century Learning”). The teacher survey also helped to put into context that the students must be aware of their audience, and in effect, communicate with that audience through their projects. Because of this, changing communication to not only communicating in groups but communicating with any perceived participants should be added to the definition. I think this is a skill that is not specific to just English fields when out in the world, but it does seem to be taught in English classes through rhetoric. When working in the job force, it is important for the workers to understand who they need to communicate with and be able to change their delivery of their own speech and the product for their audience. By utilizing the multigenre and multimodal assignments, students have to tailor each mode or genre to the specific audience that it is being written for. Some students stated in their surveys that they had a hard time with one genre/ mode or the other, like creating a video or writing the journal entry; part of the difficulty could be due to the fact that

these modes/ genres each have different audiences for much of the same information, and students have to learn to tailor their information to the particular audience to effectively communicate with that intended audience.

Overall, students and teachers both agree that multiliterate assignments are effective in helping students to utilize 21st century skills, even if they do not use all of the skills in every single project they complete. Some projects, like the multimodal project, are more effective at communication and creativity, while the multigenre project worked better at fostering the use of critical thinking skills. To answer the question how are 21st century skills used in multiliterate assignments, there is not just one answer. For each multiliterate assignment different skills are used depending on what the student is being asked to do in the assignment. When answering the question what effects do utilizing 21st century skills in multiliterate assignments help with the mastery of content, the multigenre projects seem to require students to know the content before they can even begin to work on the project whereas, the multimodal anti-bullying assignment helped students to learn the content while they were working through the project. The processes for the two types of multiliterate assignments are different, but they both help to incorporate 21st century skills.

Partnership for 21st Century Learning and other programs are pushing for classrooms to integrate the teaching of the 21st century skills into the classroom; through these assignments, students have to utilize some of the skills innately to complete the project effectively. Even when students and teachers do not fully realize that they are using the skills, because they are so wide in their definitions and activities, the students are constantly working towards their ability to effectively use the skills, and through reflection, students realized the value these skills introduced in the creation of their projects. The hope is that each time an assignment of this

nature is introduced to the student, they are better able to use these skills and it becomes easier to complete these assignments, so the difficulty level can be increased.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Importance and Advancements

Measuring student and teacher perceptions of the utilization of 21st century skills in multiliterate assignments is important when deciding how to teach content standards in high school. Using Common Core standards, the federal government, North Carolina, and policy makers are pushing educators to not only teach content but to also incorporate essential skills that students will need for the future. Schools want their students to be ready for college, career, and life, and students do not just do that by learning the content from their teachers. Instead, states that have adopted Common Core want students to have the essential skills that are necessary for success. These skills include critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, and communication, among many others.

Partnership for 21st Century Learning, just one source, has created the framework to begin to implement these skills into the classroom by offering suggestions on activities. However, the skills that students need to go to college and enter the workforce can be taught in several ways. For instance, multiliterate texts and assignments, that post-secondary schools are already using, can be implemented at the secondary level to help prepare students for their futures. Post-secondary schools are already implementing these types of skills, and secondary schools can take action to better prepare students for these experiences by incorporating similar assignments. School systems are also encouraging students to do problem-based learning and STEM activities in the classrooms to teach these skills. Multiliterate assignments help to give students the opportunities to utilize the 21st century skills that are necessary for them to use after high school. Conducting this study has helped to show the correlations between completing multiliterate assignments in the classroom and the essential skills that students utilize. This study

also helps to show how students and teachers place value on the skills students need for the future and what they feel they are learning in the classroom. Through this study, classroom teachers can have a better understanding of the types of assignments that will help students to utilize the different skills they will be required to use outside of high school.

Limitations of Research

While the research provided answers to the research questions, there were a few limitations that prevented the study from providing more data and results. The data corpus in this thesis was small in scale, and that was preventative to having more data collection points. Part of the reason the data collection was so small was because of where the research was conducted. Due to the student population of the potential participants, as described in chapter three, I was unable to have a wide variety of student participants to complete the surveys. This led to not being able to have many data results to analyze and get results from. Due to the number of people in the department at the school where research was conducted, there was a small limit placed on the number of participants available for the teacher participants. However, due to the limited amount of data, there were still many conclusions able to be drawn from the study, and it helped to show where further research could be done to continue this study in the future.

Findings

The data in this study shows a correlation that multiliterate assignments do in fact help students utilize 21st century skills when implemented into the high school English classroom. Through teacher and student perceptions of the multiliterate assignments, it was found that each assignment helped to highlight at least one important 21st century skill. While this may not apply to all multiliterate assignments, the assignments designed for this study helped students to utilize the skills of problem solving, critical thinking, creativity, and communication. Based on student

and teacher perceptions, time management and digital literacy skills were also taught through these projects.

When looking at what students took away from the project, students did show that they needed 21st century skills to complete the multiliterate assignments. They also stated, specifically in the multimodal assignment, that this project helped them to understand the content of the text they were working with. Through the multigenre project, students felt that they greatly improved their critical thinking skills. Students also felt that time management was a large part in them completing their project, and while that was not one of the initially measured skills, it is still notable that many students stated that time management was one of the key things they would take away from completing these projects. Overall, this set of participants showed that they did need to use these 21st century skills to be effective in completing their projects and understanding the text that they were working with.

The data helped to show the correlation between 21st century skills and multiliterate assignments. Students felt that the multimodal assignments utilized their creativity, problem solving and communication skills the most. Students felt they needed the skill of creativity to come up with ideas for a video and create a way to make the information interesting. They also had to problem solve to complete the assignments to the specifications necessary and make the products effective. Students also felt that they needed to communicate with their audiences and with each other while working in groups. The teachers felt slightly different in that the multimodal project utilized problem solving and communication, but not creativity. The teachers thought students needed to problem solve by doing research, figuring out how to persuade their audience, and using technology. Teachers felt students had to communicate with the audience and with their group members to complete the project.

Students felt that the multigenre assignment utilized their critical thinking and creativity skills the most. Students felt they had to be able to critically think about the play and the genres and then be creative in what they wrote for each genre. Teachers felt that critical thinking was the most important skill used in the multigenre project as well. Teachers saw the need for critical thinking when analyzing the literature and figuring out how to use that information in the different genres required of the students to create. Throughout the two assignments, the skills were each used according to both teacher and student perceptions.

One goal of the study was to ascertain if students felt that through these projects they were able to understand the content of the text they had to work with. Through the surveys, students felt that these assignments, specifically the multigenre projects, helped them to better understand the content they were learning because they were not able to complete the different genres effectively without understanding the content of the plays. This was most noted in the results of the anti-bullying project which helped students understand the content and theme of bullying.

Future Research

This research measured the student and teacher perceptions of the use of 21st century skills of critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, and communication in multiliterate assignments; however, there is future research that could be done to further expand this study or to fill in gaps in the research. For future research, there are many other essential skills that Partnership for 21st Century Learning (P21) cites students need that could be researched as to how they are incorporated, if at all, in secondary classrooms. P21 states that “today we live in a technology and media-suffused environment” and “[t]o be effective in the 21st century, citizens and workers must be able to create and effectively utilize information, media, and technology” (“Framework for 21st Century Learning”). In the school district where my research was

conducted, it is going one-to-one in the 2018-2019 school year. One-to-one means that each student is getting a device that is internet compatible. My county is specifically getting every student a Chromebook to use at school and take home. This would be a very karotic time period for this research to be completed. With the increased access to technology, teachers would be able to further expand the types of assignments given to the students. Students would gain better access to modalities and genres available through the web or through word processing software. Teachers could further expand what students would be able to accomplish through the technology. Some modalities students would gain better access to are aural or visual resources. Incorporating visuals with sound is a component that technology better enables us to create, so teachers would be able to expand the types of products they ask students to complete just through the access of technology.

The research could also be furthered by seeing what other assignments in other disciplines are used to teach the essential skills that students need in addition to the content. Multiliterate assignments do not have to be limited to just the English classroom. Other core classrooms or even elective classes can include these types of assignments. In the history class across the hall from my classroom, the students had to create multimodal books where they researched one country and presented their findings in a book. The book had to include functional sound and light modes throughout to enhance the meaning of the book they created. A music class could easily create a project where they have to include modalities of sound, visuals, and linguistic text. By expanding this research to other secondary classrooms, gaps about the effectiveness of 21st century skills could be studied in more detail.

In conclusion, this research has shown that according to the student and teacher perceptions, multiliterate assignments do facilitate the use of the measured 21st century skills of

critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, and communication, and in addition also facilitates the use of digital competency skills and time management. In the future, it is important not only to teach content to students in innovative ways that keep them engaged, but it is also important to find ways to incorporate the 21st century skills that will make students successful in the future.

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Appendix A: Consent Forms

Gardner-Webb University IRB
Student Informed Consent Form

Title of Study: Student and Teacher Perceptions of Multiliterate Assignments Utilizing 21st Century Skills

Researcher:
Jessica Miller, GWU Graduate English Program

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Jennifer Buckner

Purpose

This study is being conducted to help me, the researcher, gain a better understanding of using multiliterate assignments in the classroom to help students. The purpose of the research study is to see how multiliterate assignments can help students to learn material and use 21st century skills by looking at teachers and students' perceptions and outcomes of the assignments completed in class.

Procedure

If you agree to participate in this study, your task is to complete two multiliterate assignments. This study will be conducted in class. However, as part of the study, you will have two additional requirements in addition to the class assignments; the first is four short surveys and the second part is two reflections. One large assignment will be a multigenre play analysis and the second will be a multimodal book review. For each assignment you will take two surveys, one before the assignment and one after the assignment. The survey will be taken in Google Docs and will be composed of four questions. The survey is anonymous. You will also write a one paragraph reflection after the piece is complete to reflect on the process; this is also anonymous. If at any point you feel uncomfortable with a survey question or writing the reflection piece, you may skip it.

It is anticipated that the study will require about 11 hours *minutes/hours* of your time.

- 4 Surveys: 10 minutes each
- 2 Reflections: 30 minutes each
- In class Multigenre Assignment: 5 total hours
- In class Multimodal Assignment: 5 total hours

Voluntary Participation

Participation in this study is voluntary. The participation in this study will not affect your grade even though the assignment will be completed in class. You have the right to withdraw from the research study at any time with no affects to your grade. You also have the right to refuse to answer any question(s) for any reason. The information that you give in the study will be

handled confidentially. Your information will be assigned a *code number*. The list connecting your name to this code will be kept in a *locked file*, specifically a secure Google Drive folder. When the study is completed, and the data have been analyzed, this list will be destroyed. Your name will not be used in any report. If you choose to withdraw, you may request that any of your data which has been collected be destroyed unless it is in a de-identified state.

There are no direct benefits associated with participation in this study. You will receive no payment for participating in the study or extra points for a grade. The Institutional Review Board at Gardner-Webb University has determined that participation in this study poses minimal risk to participants. However, you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

How to Withdraw From the Study

- If you want to withdraw from the study, please notify the researcher and all data collected so far will be destroyed and no further data will be collected. There is no penalty for withdrawing.
- If you would like to withdraw after your materials have been submitted, please contact Jessica Miller at jessicakennedy@fcschools.net

If you have questions about the study or about this document, contact the following individuals.

Jessica Miller at jessicakennedy@fcschools.net.

Dr. Jennifer Buckner
English
Gardner-Webb University
Boiling Springs, NC 28017
Faculty Advisor Telephone Number
jbuckner@gardner-webb.edu

If the research design of the study necessitates that its full scope is not explained prior to participation, it will be explained to you after completion of the study. If you have concerns about your rights or how you are being treated, or if you have questions, want more information, or have suggestions, please contact the IRB Institutional Administrator listed below.

Dr. Jeffrey S. Rogers
IRB Institutional Administrator
Gardner-Webb University
Boiling Springs, NC 28017
704-406-4724
jrogers3@gardner-webb.edu

Voluntary Consent by Participant

I have read the information in this consent form and fully understand the contents of this document. I have had a chance to ask any questions concerning this study and they have been “I have read and understand the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study with the understanding that I may choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled.

Participant Printed Name

Date: _____

Participant Signature

Date: _____

Parent/ Guardian Printed Name

Date: _____

Parent/ Guardian Signature

Date: _____

You will receive a copy of this form for your records.

Gardner-Webb University IRB
Teacher Informed Consent Form

Title of Study: Student and Teacher Perceptions of Multiliterate Assignments Utilizing 21st

Century Skills

Researcher:

Jessica Miller, GWU Graduate English Program

Faculty Sponsor:

Dr. Jennifer Buckner

Purpose

The purpose of the research study is to examine the effectiveness of using multiliterate assignments in helping students to learn material and master 21st century skills by analyzing teachers and students' opinions and outcomes of the implemented assignments.

Procedure

What you will do in the study:

For the study you, the teacher, will take two short surveys about the assignments being given to students. The first survey is four question survey to measure the effectiveness of the assignment and the use of 21st century skills. The second survey is also four questions that help the researcher determine the future planning of assignments. If at any point you do not feel comfortable answering a question, you are able to skip it.

Time Required

This study will be conducted in two separate time settings. It is anticipated that the study will require about 2 ½ *minutes/hours* of your time.

- Pre-assignment Survey: 10 mins
- Post-post assignment survey: 10 minutes
- Reviewing products created by students to answer survey questions: 2 hours

Voluntary Participation

Participation in this study is voluntary. The participation in this study will not affect your grade even though the assignment will be completed in class. You have the right to withdraw from the research study at any time without penalty. You also have the right to refuse to answer any question(s) for any reason without penalty. The information that you give in the study will be handled confidentially. Your information will be assigned a *code number*. The list connecting your name to this code will be kept in a *locked file*. When the study is completed, and the data have been analyzed, this list will be destroyed. Your name will not be used in any report. If you choose to withdraw, you may request that any of your data which has been collected be destroyed unless it is in a de-identified state.

There are no direct benefits associated with participation in this study. You will receive no payment for participating in the study. The study may help us to understand how multiliteracy influences the ability to effectively utilize 21st Century skills that will be necessary after graduation from high school. The Institutional Review Board at Gardner-Webb University has determined that participation in this study poses minimal risk to participants. However, you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

How to Withdraw From the Study

- If you want to withdraw from the study, please notify the researcher and all data collected so far will be destroyed and no further data will be collected. There is no penalty for withdrawing.
- If you would like to withdraw after your materials have been submitted, please contact Jessica Kennedy at jkennedy6@gardner-webb.edu

If you have questions about the study, contact the following individuals.

Jessica Kennedy
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Gardner-Webb University
Boiling Springs, NC 28017
9193021296
Jkennedy6@gardner-webb.edu

Dr. Jennifer Buckner
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jbuckner@gardner-webb.edu

If the research design of the study necessitates that its full scope is not explained prior to participation, it will be explained to you after completion of the study. If you have concerns about your rights or how you are being treated, or if you have questions, want more information, or have suggestions, please contact the IRB Institutional Administrator listed below.

Dr. Jeffrey S. Rogers
IRB Institutional Administrator
Gardner-Webb University
Boiling Springs, NC 28017
704-406-4724
jrogers3@gardner-webb.edu

Voluntary Consent by Participant

"I have read and understand the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study with the understanding that I may choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled.

Participant Printed Name

Date: _____

Participant Signature

Date: _____

You will receive a copy of this form for your records.

Appendix B: Data Collection Tools

Pre-Assignment Student Survey

Please follow the directions for each question. There are a total of four questions.

Definitions:

Critical Thinking: analyzing, interpreting, evaluating, synthesizing, making judgments and decisions, and solving problems

Problem Solving: making decisions and finding a solution to a problem that affects you or the world around you

Communicating: giving and receiving feedback from peers or other team members in order to perform a common task

Creativity: "solving problems in new ways;" "inventing new technologies or applications;" and be challenged with "authentic, real-world problems"

1. What is the assignment?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Romeo and Juliet
- ☐ Anti-Bullying
- ☐ Julius Caesar
- ☐ Gilgamesh

2. What skills do you think you will need to complete this assignment? Check all that apply.

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Critical Thinking
- ☐ Problem Solving
- ☐ Communicating
- ☐ Creativity

3. What skill do you believe is the most important in this assignment? Select 1.

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Critical Thinking
- ☐ Problem Solving
- ☐ Communicating
- ☐ Creativity

4. In one sentence, what do you believe is the hardest part of this assignment?

Post Student Survey

Please follow the directions for each question. There are a total of four questions.

Definitions:

Critical Thinking: analyzing, interpreting, evaluating, synthesizing, making judgments and decisions, and solving problems

Problem Solving: making decisions and finding a solution to a problem that affects you or the world around you

Communicating: giving and receiving feedback from peers or other team members in order to perform a common task

Creativity: "solving problems in new ways;" "inventing new technologies or applications;" and be challenged with "authentic, real-world problems"

1. Which assignment did you complete?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Romeo and Juliet
- ☐ Anti-Bullying
- ☐ Julius Caesar
- ☐ Gilgamesh

2. What skills did you need to complete this assignment? Please select all that apply.

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Critical Thinking
- ☐ Problem Solving
- ☐ Communicating
- ☐ Creativity

3. What skill was the most important to complete this assignment?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Critical Thinking
- ☐ Problem Solving
- ☐ Communicating
- ☐ Creativity

4. What was the hardest part of the assignment?

Teacher Perceptions Survey

Please follow the directions for each question. There are a total of four questions.

Definitions:

Critical Thinking: analyzing, interpreting, evaluating, synthesizing, making judgments and decisions, and solving problems

Problem Solving: making decisions and finding a solution to a problem that affects you or the world around you

Communicating: giving and receiving feedback from peers or other team members in order to perform a common task

Creativity: "solving problems in new ways;" "inventing new technologies or applications;" and be challenged with "authentic, real-world problems"

1. Looking at the two Multigenre projects, which skills do you think these assignments will encourage students to analyze? Choose all that apply.

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Critical Thinking
- ☐ Problem Solving
- ☐ Communicating
- ☐ Creativity

2. Looking at the two Multimodal projects, which skills do you think these assignments will encourage students to analyze? Choose all that apply.

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Critical Thinking
- ☐ Problem Solving
- ☐ Communicating
- ☐ Creativity

3. Multigenre Projects: What do you think the students will learn in creating this assignment?

4. Multimodal Projects: What do you think the students will learn in creating this assignment?

7/8/2018

Teacher Perceptions Survey

- 5. Multigenre Projects: How do you think these assignments fit with both content and incorporating 21st century skills (critical thinking, problem solving, communicating, creativity)?**

- 6. Multimodal Projects: How do you think these assignments fit with both content and incorporating 21st century skills (critical thinking, problem solving, communicating, creativity)?**

- 7. Multigenre assignment -What 21st century skills is the most important in creation of this project? Pick 1.**

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Critical Thinking
☐ Problem Solving
☐ Communicating
☐ Creativity

- 8. Multimodal assignment -What 21st century skills is the most important in creation of this project? Pick 1.**

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Critical Thinking
☐ Problem Solving
☐ Communicating
☐ Creativity

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Appendix C: Student Assignments

Anti-Bullying Campaign

Background

As we have been reading *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, the main character Junior has had to endure multiple instances of bullying throughout. There are four different kinds of bullying: physical, social, verbal, and cyber. Each type has their own indicators and effects. Junior experiences more than one type in the novel, and he has to learn on how to deal with the different kinds. People stick up for him, but what happens if someone else is getting bullied?

Task

- Working in groups of 4, use research and *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* to create an anti-bullying campaign for your county/ school.
- Your audience is the school board of Franklin County and/or parents of the students in Franklin County to help decrease bullying instances within our school.
- You will need to create a video and pick one other option to present your information and plan in.
- You should choose at least two of the bullying types to help combat (physical, social, verbal, cyber)

Options to choose from:

- Required: video (recording of your group doing something)
- Posters
- Pamphlet
- Picture book
- Informational video
- Letters written to school board for change
- Programs for the school to initiate
- Another option approved by me

Additional Information

- Each option must have a rough draft
- Rough draft must be approved by me
- Must cite all sources used (MLA)
- **All questions must be answered in complete sentences.**

Questions

1. List and explain the four different kinds of bullying.
2. What has been done in the past to prevent bullying?
3. What consequences, school and state/federal level, are in place for people who bully?
4. How will your campaign help put a stop to bullying in schools?
5. How is your particular campaign going to help stop bullying in your county/school?
6. How would a public school county go about implementing your anti-bullying campaign into the schools?

Option Requirements:

All options should be professional, not sloppy. All sources must be cited. You will have to present these to the class.

1. Video
 - a. Minimum of 2 minutes long
 - b. All group members must participate in some way
 - c. Not just information (hence, informational video below)
 - d. Uploaded to YouTube for our classroom (I will help you)
2. Poster
 - a. Create 2 options
 - b. Colored
 - c. Words and a graphic
 - d. Hand-done or printed
3. Pamphlet
 - a. Informational
 - b. Pictures
 - c. Must have resources given to the audience
 - d. Printed
4. Picture Book
 - a. Minimum of 5 photos
 - b. Captions and explanations of photos
 - c. Photos are part of the MLA citation
 - d. Printed or hand-done
5. Informational Video
 - a. Must be at least 1 minute
 - b. Must give facts and important information
 - c. Include sources
6. Letter
 - a. Addressed to the school board
 - b. Minimum three paragraphs
 - c. Proper letter formatting
 - d. Typed and printed
7. Programs
 - a. Plan of action fully developed
 - b. Resources required
 - c. Answer when, where, how, how much, who?
 - d. Typed and printed or hand-done

ALL information that you find for this project MUST be cited in MLA citation style.

The *Epic of Gilgamesh* Multimodal Assignment

Part 1: Create Your Own Epic

Directions: In groups of 2/3, review the Elements of the Epic Hero Cycle and the elements of the epic hero. Review the notes on Gilgamesh's qualities and his adventures. As a group, you will create a hero and a corresponding quest/journey for him. Make sure to address each of the elements of the journey. You will have to present your hero and his/her quest to the class. **Every part of this project must be school appropriate or you will receive a zero.**

Tasks:

1. Create your hero (25 points possible)
 - Name
 - Description of his physical and personality attributes (this can be in list form)
 - Back story: At least one paragraph
 - How old is he?
 - Where does he live?
 - Family
 - How did he become such a prominent member in your society?
2. Using the “Elements of the Epic Hero Cycle,” create a quest for him/her (50 Points)
 - Two options: Set in a land far away, or during today in America.
 - Story needs to be at least one-page long
 - You must address every element of the archetype (8 Key Elements).
 - You must use at least 3 types of Rhetorical Devices in your story.
 - Make sure you explain the obstacle the hero must overcome and the outcome.
3. Illustrate your hero (15 Points)
 - Create a picture that represents your hero
 - You can draw a picture of them on their journey, a picture of him to post on flyers around the “town”, a representation of him that people would recognize
 - Must be creative, colorful, neat, and an accurate representation of your hero.
 - Hand drawn or

Part 2: Record a Trailer

Directions: In the same groups, you are going to create and record a 45 second to 1 minute 30 second trailer for The Epic of Gilgamesh.

Tasks:

1. Create a script

2. Create any props or backdrops needed (may be able to use green screen in library)
3. Record video
4. Post video for class to watch.

***Romeo and Juliet* Multigenre Unit Project**

Introduction:

We are currently reading *Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare in class. As we work through the play you will be responsible for taking notes and working on this project. There are four parts that are required to be shown. These parts are going to require creativity and analysis to be completed correctly.

Purpose:

This assignment is designed to enable you to explore *Romeo and Juliet* as a part of the text. These projects will require you to be characters and think about what is happening as if you were really there. You will be able to analyze and explain the genre and the literary terms through this project, and it will help you gain a better understanding of the characters, the plot, and the purpose of this play.

Assignments:

Part I:

You will need to keep a journal for each act of the play. You will pick **one** of the key characters in the play and write from that character's point of view. You can choose to write as Romeo, Juliet, or the Nurse. Your journal entries will need to be $\frac{3}{4}$ **page** for every act. There will be **5 journals total**.

In your reading you may not always find enough information to complete an entire page journal entry. Here, you will have the freedom to fill-in these gaps with your own ideas of what you believe happened with your character. These journals must embody how you believe your character would think, talk, and act. Proper grammar does not have to be included if you do not believe that your character would use it; however, you must also remember the ages of your character and the time period.

Part II:

For Part II you are going to rewrite one scene from the play that occurs before Act 5 to make it more relatable and using common English. You may rewrite it in the **traditional** sense of translating it to common English using slang, contractions, correct wording, but staying in the play format with names, stage directions, and format. You can also create a **short story** of the scene instead of rewriting it as a play. You may **record a song/rap** that retells what happens in that scene. You can **write a poem** that depicts what happens in the scene.

The key to this part is to not change the meaning of the scene but make it so that anyone today would be able to understand what is going on.

Part III:

This part will assess your ability to understand types of dramatic speeches and literary terms. For Part III, your goal is to write a **dramatic monologue** for one of the parents of either Romeo or Juliet. In your monologue, you will need to explore his/her thoughts, feelings, and mood on the marriage of his/her child of the enemy. You can write this in prose or poems, use metaphors, similes, irony, and rhyme. If you choose to write it as poetry, it will need to be 8 or more lines. If you choose to do it as prose, it will need to be 5 or more lines.

Part IV:

Part IV is going to be a **formal, critical essay** to demonstrate your understanding of the play's importance in the literary canon. The paper will need to have at least three paragraphs and no more than six paragraphs.

You are also required to complete the process materials for this essay. You will need to turn in a brainstorming activity, rough outline, rough draft, and the final copy. I highly recommend you get with a partner and choose a day for peer review during one of your class days to work.

Possible topics that you may choose are:

- How does Shakespeare treat death in Romeo and Juliet? Compare the deaths of Romeo and Juliet to that of Mercutio's and Tybalt's deaths. (2 body)
- Why do you believe that Shakespeare choose such a tragic ending for his main characters? (1 body)
- Explain how are the two lovers "star-crossed"? (2-3 body)
- Do you believe Romeo and Juliet have more of a responsibility to their families, their city, or their love? Did they do this in the text? If yes, give examples; if no, give examples. (2-3 body)
- How does Shakespeare treat the theme of Love? Think about Romeo and Juliet, Romeo and Rosaline, Nurse and Tybalt, Nurse and Juliet, The Capulets and Juliet, etc. (1-2 body)
- Critical topic approved by me

Assessment Tools

Each part is worth a certain number of points that when put together with the other 3 parts will add up to be **147 points**. These points will then be turned into a percentage grade. Each part of the project will have a rubric to grade from.

Part I: 50 Point Total

This part will require you to become one of the major characters and analyze the plot of each act. This is where you will be assessed. Each journal completed will be given up to 10 points, for a total of 50 points. The point breakdown for each journal is as follows:

_____ / 3: Stayed true to the character's voice with grammar and terms

_____ / 5: The events from the journal matched the act that was read.

_____ / 2: Length requirements were met.

_____ / **10: Total (each journal)**

Journal 1:

Journal 2:

Journal 3:

Journal 4:

Journal 5:

Total:

Part II: 35 Points Total

This part will require you to analyze the scene and become the author of that part of the play. Here you will understand the purpose for that specific scene. Each re-written scene will be graded based on the following rubric:

_____ / 10: Re-write stay true to events that happen in that scene.

_____ / 15: Re-write is in "Everyday English"

_____ / 10: Creativity was used in creating the re-write (i.e. did not translate the scene

word for word, left out stage directions/ setting/ characters names, summarized the scene)

_____ / **35: Total**

Part III: 20 Points Total

_____ / 5: Monologue is at least 8 lines (poem)/ 5 lines (prose)

_____ / 10: Monologue expresses the ideas of the parent about the marriage

_____ / 5: At least 1 type of literary term was used (list at the top of the page)

_____ / **20: Total**

Part IV: 42 Points Total

This part is going to require you to be critical of the genre and stylistic choices. It is your job to criticize the choices that were made in the play and determine how it works within the genre of drama. The following rubric will be used to assess the written essay portion.

	6	4	2	0
Introduction Paragraph	Introduces the text and provides a brief background that is needed as context for the essay.	Introduces the text but leaves out key parts of the background that is needed.	Either does not introduce the text or doesn't provide background information.	Does not introduce the text and does not provide background

Thesis Statement	Statement provided is complete (states your position on the subject) and states examples that will be expanded upon	Statement is attempted, but lacks your position on the topic or the examples you will be using.	Statement is attempted but the position is not stated and the examples are not stated.	There is no thesis statement.
Body Paragraphs (Check description for more information)	All body paragraphs tie back to the thesis statement and uses many examples referencing the text.	Some body paragraphs are mostly on topic but are not tied to thesis or lack references to the text.	Some body paragraphs try to tie back to the thesis and they lack references to the text.	Body paragraphs are missing any key details for the argument.
Conclusion Paragraph	Sums up the ideas in a cohesive paragraph that leaves a lasting impression on the reader.	Tries to sum up the ideas but does not give a clear take-away.	Does not sum up information and reiterate the argument.	There is no cohesive conclusion.
Content	Information is correct (plot and characters) and critical of the text using references to the text. Not a summary.	Information stated is critical of the text but lacks some examples or information presented is incorrect.	Information is either not critical of the text (summary) or is completely incorrect.	Information is not critical and it is not correct.
Organization	The information is presented in a logical order and transitions well between paragraphs.	The information is mostly in a logical order and somewhat transitions well.	The information is in a fairly logical order, but paragraphs do not transition well.	There is no logical order or transitions.
Grammar	There are less than 5 errors.	There are 6-10 errors.	There are 11-15 errors.	There are 16 + errors.

Julius Caesar Multigenre Project

Introduction: As we have been reading *Julius Caesar* in class, I am asking you to take the information that we are learning, and present it in different genres of writing to show mastery of the information of the play.

Purpose: This project is going to allow you to use different forms of writing to show your understanding of what is happening in the play. You will become different characters, write creatively, and analyze the play and its contribution to literature.

Parts:

Part 1: Create a news article to give information about the death of Caesar and the conspiracy behind it. After Caesar's death, the citizens have to find out exactly what happened. You will write a news article describing the conspiracy from the inside out. You should answer what happened, why, when, and how.

Part 2: Create the profile of a good Roman citizen. Throughout the play, there are hints as to what makes a good Roman citizen. You are going to create an additional character in the play that exemplifies these characteristics of a good Roman citizen. You will also need to decide if your character would follow Caesar or if they would follow Brutus.

Part 3: Create your own speech to give at the funeral of Brutus. Antony gave an oration at Caesar's funeral to turn the Romans against Brutus and the conspirators. However, when Brutus dies, Antony believes that Brutus was acting in favor of the common good and was an example of a good man. Use elements of rhetoric (ethos, logos, and pathos) to write the speech to convince the general public of Brutus' decisions being justified.

Part 4: Write a formal critical essay. Pick from one of the topics below to write your essay on. Each essay will have different length requirements, but all must use copious references to the text.

Possible Topics:

- Characters with tragic flaws are a common characteristic of Shakespeare's works. What is Brutus' tragic flaw? What about Caesar's? How do their tragic flaws lead to their downfalls? Be sure to use specific examples from the play. (4-5 paragraphs)
- Analyze the character of Brutus. Was he a good and honorable man? Was his downfall his own fault? What brought it about? In the end, could he still be considered a good man? Be sure to use specific examples from the play. (3-4 paragraphs)
- In William Shakespeare's famed tragedy, *Julius Caesar*, the title character says, "Men in general are quick to believe that which they wish to be true." While this quote can be proven in many instances, the citizens of Rome in Caesar's time were quick to follow the words of whoever gave the most effective public speech at the time. Think about the funeral speeches that were given after Julius Caesar's

assassination and the effect the speeches had on the Roman people. Argue who gave the most effective funeral speech: Mark Antony or Marcus Brutus. Support your choice by quoting evidence from the play of the speaker using ethos, pathos, and logos. (4-5 paragraphs)

- Argue Shakespeare's attitude toward the common people as exemplified by his treatment of them in Act I, scenes 1 & 2 and in Act III, scenes 2 & 3. Consider how Shakespeare portrayed the Roman citizens based on the events of the play. (4-5 paragraphs)
- Calpurnia and Portia are the only two female characters in the play. In a well-organized essay, compare the women, analyze their roles and reveal what they contribute to the play. How are these women important in the story? (4-5 paragraphs)
- Are Caesar and Antony really true friends? Cassius and Brutus? How is friendship defined through the characters in the play? Which of Shakespeare's characters can truly be called friends? Analyze the friendships in the play. (3-4 paragraphs)

Specifics and Assessment

Each assignment will be worth a different amount of points. The four assignments will total 131 points as a test grade for this unit.

Part 1: News Article (12 points)

Your job is to write a news article for the paper about the death of Julius Caesar. This article must be based on the true events that occurred in the play. (If you do not know the terminology, you may need to look it up)

	2	1	0
Headline	Included catchy title to the story.	Basic title to the story.	No title
Byline	Included your pen name.		No name
Lead Paragraph (Thesis)	Short, concise summary of the article.	Tried to summarize, but not successful.	Did not include
Point of View	Story is told with the perspective of what is going on behind the scenes with the plot against Caesar.	Story is mostly told with the perspective of what is going on behind the scenes with the plot against Caesar.	Not told with the point of view of someone behind the conspiracy.
Facts and Details	Very descriptive with the facts and details in the article about what happened to Caesar.	Somewhat descriptive and included some facts and details about what happened to Caesar.	Barely included any facts or details about the event.
Grammar	0-5 grammatical errors.	6-10 grammatical errors.	11+ grammatical errors.

Total: _____ / 12

Part 2: Create a good Roman Citizen (40 points)

Your job is to use the text to create a “good” Roman citizen based on the values outlines in the drama. You can base your character off of the other characters in play, but they must be realistic without copying what has already been written. Your character must show through an example how they exhibit “good” Roman characteristics.

_____/ 5: Character name

_____/ 5: Physical Description

_____/ 10: Personality and Behavior Description (likes and dislikes; what are they like as a person?)

_____/ 5: Details about what the character does on a daily basis

_____/ 15: A short (5-10 sentence) antidote that highlights something your character did that people would admire him for in the Roman culture.

_____/ 40 Total

Part 3: Speech (37 points)

You are writing the speech from Antony’s POV trying to convince your fellow citizens that Brutus was acting in favor of the common good of the Romans (use the last lines of Act 5 Scene 5 to help you). You are going to deliver this speech using three examples of rhetorical devices (ethos, pathos, logos) and two examples of literary devices. Your speech should be written in prose or poetry.

_____/5: Rhetorical Device 1

_____/5: Rhetorical Device 2

_____/5: Rhetorical Device 3

_____/5: Literary Device 1

_____/5: Literary Device 2

_____/2: Antony POV

_____/10: 15 lines of poetry or 10 sentences

_____/37: Total

Part 4: Write a critical essay (42 points)

Pick one topic from above to write a formal critical essay. Check the requirements for the body paragraphs, but all essays must have an introduction, a thesis statement, and a conclusion paragraph.

	6	4	2	0
Introduction Paragraph	Introduces the text and provides a brief background that is needed as context for the essay.	Introduces the text but leaves out key parts of the background that is needed.	Either does not introduce the text or doesn’t provide background information.	Does not introduce the text and does not provide background

Thesis Statement	Statement provided is complete (states your position on the subject) and states examples that will be expanded upon	Statement is attempted, but lacks your position on the topic or the examples you will be using.	Statement is attempted but the position is not stated and the examples are not stated.	There is no thesis statement.
Body Paragraphs (Check description for more information)	All body paragraphs tie back to the thesis statement and uses many examples referencing the text.	Some body paragraphs are mostly on topic but are not tied to thesis or lack references to the text.	Some body paragraphs try to tie back to the thesis and they lack references to the text.	Body paragraphs are missing any key details for the argument.
Conclusion Paragraph	Sums up the ideas in a cohesive paragraph that leaves a lasting impression on the reader.	Tries to sum up the ideas but does not give a clear take-away.	Does not sum up information and reiterate the argument.	There is no cohesive conclusion.
Content	Information is correct (plot and characters) and critical of the text using references to the text. Not a summary.	Information stated is critical of the text but lacks some examples or information presented is incorrect.	Information is either not critical of the text (summary) or is completely incorrect.	Information is not critical and it is not correct.
Organization	The information is presented in a logical order and transitions well between paragraphs.	The information is mostly in a logical order and somewhat transitions well.	The information is in a fairly logical order, but paragraphs do not transition well.	There is no logical order or transitions.
Grammar	There are less than 5 errors.	There are 6-10 errors.	There are 11-15 errors.	There are 16 + errors.

Total: _____ / 42

Project total: _____ / 131 = _____ %