Lesson Plan: Benjamin Franklin and the Happiness Project

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Objectives

Note: This lesson plan is intended for students in a sophomore Honors English class. It will be used during the unit on non-fiction.

1. Students will read and understand the content and purpose of Benjamin Franklin's “bold and arduous Project of arriving at moral Perfection” (excerpted from Part III of The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin).
2. Students will read and understand the content and purpose of Gretchen Rubin’s “Getting Started” (excerpted from The Happiness Project).
3. Students will compare and contrast the two pieces.
4. Students will reflect how these works are relevant in their own lives.

State Standards

Note: These standards are taken from the Common Core Standards found on the Illinois State Board of Education website (www.isbe.net).

CC.9-10.R.L. 1 Key Ideas and Details: Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CC.9-10.R.L.10 Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity: By the end of grade 10, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, at the high end of the grades 9-10 text complexity.

CC.9-10.R.I.6 Craft and Structure: Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how an author uses rhetoric to advance that point of view or purpose.

CC.9-10.R.ST.9 Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: Compare and contrast findings presented in a text to those from other sources (including their own experiments), noting when the findings support or contradict previous explanations or accounts.

CC.9-10.SL.6 Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas: Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

CC.9-10.SL.1 Comprehension and Collaboration: Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
CC.9-10.W.HST.10 Range of Writing: Write routinely over extended time frames (time for reflection and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Materials Needed

2. *The Happiness Project* by Gretchen Rubin, “Getting Started” chapter
3. *All I Ever Really Needed to Know I Learned in Kindergarten* by Robert Fulghum, Chapter 1

Procedures

*Day One*

1. Students will write a list of 25 Things they would like to accomplish before they die (Note: This also can be assigned as homework due on Day One).
2. In small groups, students will share their lists and discuss the similarities and differences between them.
3. As a whole class, students will discuss their group’s findings, and will discuss the number of tasks currently accomplished as well as possible plans for accomplishing these goals.
4. Students then will play a game of Risk, where they are invited to complete certain tasks in front of the class (however, they will not know what these tasks are until it is their turn). Tasks can include things such as singing in front of the class, or telling a story in front of the class.
5. Teacher will tie the 25 Things list and Risk game together by relating them to Gretchen Rubin’s experiment: One day, she realized that she had many things left on her life list, but she wasn’t taking the risks to complete them. For that reason, she undertook an experiment on happiness.

*Day Two*

1. Students will individually read and annotate “Getting Started.” In particular, they will pay attention to the author’s intended audience, the author’s purpose in writing the essay, and how the author accomplishes her purpose.
2. For homework, students will read and annotate the excerpt from *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*.

*Day Three*

1. With a partner, students will create a chart to compare and contrast the two works. They will discuss factors such as
   a. The background of each experiment
   b. The purpose of each experiment
   c. How the experiment was carried out
   d. The topics researched in each experiment
   e. The success of each experiment
   f. The authors of each experiment
2. After comparing and contrasting the two works, students will review their list of 25 Things to Do Before They Die. Using the pieces as a model, students will write a specific plan to accomplish at least five of their goals.

3. For homework, students will read and annotate the excerpt from All I Ever Really Needed to Know I Learned in Kindergarten.

**Day Four**

1. Teacher will lead class in a discussion about the themes found in the previous night’s homework. This discussion will place particular attention on the life creeds that Fulghum mentions and will relate them back to the two pieces previously studied.

2. Students then will give a brief soapbox speech that explains one of their core life beliefs.

**Assessment**

1. List of 25 Things and written reflection
2. Student annotations
3. Student discussion
4. Compare and contrast chart
5. Speech