INTEGRATING THE COGNITIVE TOOLS: WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS?

A teacher’s story on using IE in the classroom

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ABSTRACT

This action research project which investigates the question “What are the effects of cognitive tool integration in the classroom?” is a qualitative research study looking at student engagement through emotional connection to the topic and the introduction of cognitive tools from the Imaginative Education approach. Research shows that when students are engaged, they are more likely to succeed academically (Parsons, 2015). Over a course of three weeks, lessons on short story writing were designed using cognitive tools of the Romantic understanding to support literacy. The subjects were a class of Grade 7 students who participated in imaginative lessons promoting engagement and reported their interest and engagement during the lesson as part of the data. Students reported feeling most engaged when using graphic organizers in collaboration with their peers, as opposed to individually, and through the use of affective mental imagery. Students reported feeling the least engaged when tasks were too simple or not challenging enough, or in this case, scavenging for objects and listing describing words or adjectives. Overall, it can be concluded that not all students respond to all cognitive tools the same way, that is, not all students are engaged the same way. Other factors should also be taken into consideration including students’ energy levels during the time of day when planning lessons incorporating the cognitive tools, and multimodal representation in designing engaging activities. Nevertheless, for the teacher who has never experienced or incorporated IE in her classroom before, the IE approach is worth trying because it helps to evoke wonder in topics and engage students emotionally to promote engagement.
SECTION I: INTRODUCTION

In my conversations with teachers in my district, a common complaint is that many students are “lazy,” disinterested, and do not care about their learning. Whether students are not handing in work on time, or at all, or distracted during instructions by their phones, whatever the issue is, students are not engaged the way teachers would like. What accounts for this disengagement? Could it be that our current education system, despite its makeover in the form of a new BC curriculum, is not designed to meet the needs and challenges of today’s students?

Even the best teacher-on-call cannot always materialize perfectly engaging lessons on the spot, but as an educator, I am interested in the topic of student engagement. For the classroom teacher, what is the experience like integrating “cognitive tools” from the Imaginative Education approach into practice? Can it be done, or is it simply “one more thing,” to check off the list? Next, even if it can be done, is it worthwhile? Ultimately, through my action research project, I investigate the effects of incorporating cognitive tools on student engagement.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF EDUCATION?

In teacher education programs, student teachers are taught to differentiate learning instruction to suit learners’ needs. We are taught that students have unique learning styles from the theories of Howard Gardner’s multiple intelligences, and to scaffold and teach at a child’s abilities according to Vygotsky. We should reward positive behaviour as recommended by B.F. Skinner, and like Piaget, teach beginning with what students know. Let’s not forget the all-important Bloom’s taxonomy. Despite all of these theories and more, how do we ensure students enjoy learning? What is the purpose of education?

The three major theories or approaches to education, as described by Egan & Gajdamaschko (2003) are based on Plato, Piaget and Rosseau. The first of the three is the idea that learning occurs under the guidance of an expert, and that an individual should accumulate as much knowledge as possible in order to be considered “educated.” The second approach of education is to learn critical thinking skills in order to challenge and change existing norms and values, also known as progressive education. The third is a traditional approach to education which encourages whole-child learning supporting a child’s natural interests and abilities. Egan (2006)
argues that these progressive and traditionalist approaches for education are essentially incompatible in our education system, and do not account for internal intellectual development and reflexivity – the ability to think about one’s own thinking.

Imaginative Education is an educational approach for engaging students in their learning. Kieran Egan (2006) argues that the Imaginative Education approach can engage students by learning with the cognitive tools introduced in *The Educated Mind*. The Imaginative Education approach encourages meaning-making and emotional connections to topics. The approach is developed through the work of Vygotsky and Piaget, specifically on language, story, and stages of development. Egan argues that there are cognitive strategies that work well at certain stages of a child’s life based on their cultural context and linguistic development and that the Imaginative Education approach is the answer to the incompatibilities between the theories of Rosseau, Piaget and Plato. It should be mentioned, however, that the kinds of understanding that will be described below are not meant to be developed in steps. Rather, the cognitive tools should be incorporated from all kinds of understandings at all stages of development in order to support mastery of all tools.

The pre-linguistic stage, or Somatic Understanding, introduces cognitive tools that associate with bodily experience such as emotions, humour, playfulness, musicality, patterns, and gesture and communication. These cognitive tools are first introduced in early childhood because most children experience and make sense of the world through their senses before they develop verbal language.

The next stage is oral language, or Mythic Understanding, with cognitive tools such as affective mental imagery, play, jokes and humour, story, rhyme, patterns, abstract binary oppositions, metaphor, and sense of mystery, promoting engagement at the primary elementary level. At the age, students are drawn to binary opposites such as good and evil through stories about fantastical creatures such as talking animals in children’s books and fairy tales.

The third stage is Romantic Understanding, at the written language stage. The cognitive tools associated with Romantic Understanding include the literate eye (graphic organizers), extremes and limits of reality and experience, association with the heroic, change of context or role play, matters of detail, collections, and a sense of wonder. These cognitive tools can be a focus
in instruction at the intermediate elementary to early secondary school level, a time when young adults are drawn extremes in texts such as the *Guinness Book of World Records* and are fascinated by superheroes.

The fourth stage is theoretical thinking, or Philosophic Understanding, which incorporates hypothesis and experiment, processes, search for authority and truth, transcendence from player to historical agent, general theories and their anomalies, definition of self, and craving for generality.

The last stage in the Imaginative Education approach is Ironic Understanding, or reflexive use of language. According to Egan, developing reflexive thinking is one of the main goals for our education system. It can be the case that many of us university grad students have not quite fully developed Ironic Understanding. The cognitive tools associated with Ironic Understanding are limits of language, alienation to buoyancy, self-reflexive language use, appreciation of ambiguity, and the Socratic stance.

Imaginative Education is not necessarily a new approach, as it is inspired by the theories of Gardner’s multiple intelligences, Piaget’s stages of development, and Vygotsky’s ideas on the Zone of Proximal Development and language development. However, Imaginative Education encourages teachers to find something meaningful about the topic they are teaching and connect it to students emotionally to make the content more engaging. Egan (2006), recommends incorporating and utilizing the cognitive tools of Romantic Understanding to develop literacy and promote engagement in literacy tasks.

**WHAT ENGAGES STUDENTS?**

Imaginative Education is concerned with students’ emotional engagement to a topic, and one of the main ways IE strives to connect students to topics emotionally is through story. There are many similarities between Imaginative Education and the strategies for engagement explained by Parsons (2015). According to Parsons, when students are engaged, they are more likely to succeed academically. He says a “plague of disengagement exists in our classrooms” in the United States (p. 223). In my discussions with teachers at Surrey Schools, the same can be said about their students. Engaging students can be a challenging task. Parsons describes affective engagement as
“interest, enjoyment, and enthusiasm” (p. 224). Students can display behavioural engagement through “effortful participation, and cognitive engagement through “strategic behaviour, persistence and metacognition,” (p. 224). He argues that “students do not remain engaged [in a lesson], instead, students’ engagement fluctuates across and within lessons (Fredricks et al., 2004 as cited by Parsons, 2015, p. 224). Therefore, engagement “can be conceptualized as an aptitude where students are generally engaged in academic work, but it can also be an event, varying throughout the school day” (p. 224).

As previously mentioned, we know that engagement is an important contributor to students’ learning. This is true in reading, for example. According to Parsons (2015), “in their analysis of Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), Bronzo, Shiel, and Topping (2008) identified reading engagement as one of the most powerful factors affecting students’ reading achievement (p. 224). In his article, Parsons argues that research has demonstrated that authenticity, collaboration, choice, appropriate challenge, and sustained learning are important factors contributing to engagement in classroom tasks (p. 224). Grounded in self-determination theory, Ryan & Deci (2002) suggest that “relatedness, competence, and autonomy” are needs that guide behaviour. In a classroom, this refers to “the degree which students feel connected to others... perceiving themselves competent... and feeling a sense of control over their actions” respectively (p. 225).

Parsons’ study aims to discover what tasks students find most and least engaging, and how teachers can make literacy lessons more engaging for students. The results of Parsons’ study show that the most engaging literacy tasks for students involve authenticity, collaboration, and choice. In addition, students reported disengagement when tasks were too difficult, or confusing, and had little involvement. Furthermore, students often mentioned they wanted opportunities for collaboration and support for completing tasks (p. 227). Parsons recommends that teachers use multimodal displays (texts and visuals), increasing graphic organizer use, and focusing on interesting elements of the content to promote and support student engagement. Interestingly, many of these suggestions parallel the suggestions Egan makes for engaging students with Imaginative Education. Through the cognitive tools of the literate eye, affective mental imagery, oral stories, extremes of limits and reality, and overall, finding the emotional significance of a topic
through story, students can connect to topics emotionally, promoting engagement and learning success.

WHY DOES LITERACY MATTER?

My teaching specialty is English Language Arts. More often than not, I am in an English or Humanities classroom, working with a group of students on their reading, writing, and creative and critical thinking skills. What is the purpose of literacy? The most important thing for me is not whether students learn to write a synthesis essay and achieve a ‘6,’ or whether they can accurately interpret Shakespeare. The most important question for me is can students apply the ideas they engage with from the texts they study, apply the content they learn to the world, and think critically? Are they able to discern fact from fiction, real news from “fake news,” and make informed decisions? Are they actively involved in creating content, rather than passively reading? This is literacy to me. Literacy is not simply a text that is read or written but engaged with in multiple forms: multimodal digital texts such as blogs and videos; written texts such as stories, books, and written poetry; oral texts such as spoken-word poetry; and visual texts such as images, as just a few examples. The possibilities for what students can read, interpret, and create are infinite. The purpose of language is to communicate ideas, the thing that makes us human. The question I want to investigate is how does one engage students in their learning, specifically in literacy?

PART 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

VYGOTSKY AND EDUCATION


Vygotsky was interested in a child’s social learning through language and development, more so than his contemporary Jean Piaget. Vygotsky’s theories can be considered “progressive” because they supported critical thinking breaking the norm that the ruling class decided what knowledge and skills were valuable to learn and preserved the “existing social order because it serves their interests” (p. 4). Language, he argues, is a critical tool that sets human beings apart from other species. Vygotsky believed that language has a central role in cognitive development,
and that language is necessary to make meaning. Ultimately, “language largely determines the ways a child learns ‘how’ to think” and that challenging through processes will make new meanings for children (p. 7). Vygotsky argued that oral language is developed through private speech (inner voices, or the thoughts in our minds). The cognitive tools are cultural tools that support students’ higher order thinking through language, representations, patterns, signs, and symbols to make sense of the world.

KIERAN EGAN AND IMAGINATIVE EDUCATION


In *The Educated Mind* (1998), Egan introduces the background and context of the Imaginative Education approach rooted in Vygotsky’s research on education. Egan introduces various theories on the purpose of education in history and argues that incompatibility on the ideas of the purpose of education is part of the problem why our education system as it stands is ineffective. Egan proposes that human development be mimicked in our teaching strategies, thus introducing the cognitive tools. The cognitive tools help develop the various types of understanding developed by Egan: somatic (pre-oral language), mythic (oral language), romantic (literate), philosophic (general schemes), and ironic (reflexivity). Egan argues that the emotional significance of a topic paired with cognitive tools enriches learning and development of the mind.


This text details the cognitive tools of the five kinds of understanding (Somatic, Mythic, Romantic, Philosophic, and Ironic) with explanations and activity ideas for their use for each type of understanding. The text also gives sample templates that can be used as a resource for teacher planning purposes and the incorporation of cognitive tools in lesson activities.

The article introduces ideas around imagination and teaching practices. It explores the relationship between imaginative teaching and learning. The article discusses the theoretical and practical challenges encountered by the imaginative approach to education. It argues that teaching needs to be grounded in more imaginative approaches to increase student engagement and optimize learning. Fettes is a member of the Faculty of Education at Simon Fraser University and his work is closely linked to that of Kieran Egan, who also argues for the importance of engaging learners’ imaginations when teaching. Fettes makes the argument that engaging students through imagination is the best approach for education. He argues that imagination should be used throughout teaching, not just as a hook. He also argues that student-teachers in the Education program are conditioned to believe that “knowledge consists in arranging words and other symbols in a one-to-one correspondence with reality.” His argument implies that this approach is contradictory to his beliefs about education.

LITERACY AND ENGAGEMENT


Egan’s book presents classroom examples of how Imaginative Education can be practically applied to the classroom through the use of cognitive tools. In Chapter 2, Egan explores the cognitive tools of romantic understanding for teaching literacy specifically. In Chapter 2.5, Egan gives relevant classroom examples to aid teachers in applying cognitive tools practically.


In his book on teaching literacy, Egan introduces the Imaginative Education approach focusing on developing core literacy skills. Egan presents strategies to help students remember and retain material for authentic learning through the use of cognitive tools. The book contains resources such as activities on literacy building, sample lessons, and planning frameworks to design lessons based on the literacy strategies of the Imaginative Education approach.

Egan focuses on key cognitive tools to develop Romantic Understanding for teaching literacy. Egan argues that “development of logical operations and development of imagination,
self-reflection, emotions, and awareness of the child’s own thinking” is supported with the use of these cognitive tools to teach literacy. These cognitive tools include extremes and limits of reality and experience, transcending constraints through the heroic, affective images capturing powerful emotion, idealism and revolt, focus on details, humanizing knowledge, and the narrative mind.


Egan & Gajdamaschko (2003) in the article “Some cognitive tools of literacy,” assert that the three traditional concepts of education and its purpose are ultimately incompatible. The three major educational theorists that inspire many of the popular educational programs in schools today, which are recycled through time, are Plato, Jean-Jacques Rosseau, and Jean Piaget.

The three general approaches to teaching based on the work of Vygotsky are: engaging learners with the guide of an expert as an apprentice to a new set of skills, using reading and writing to code and decode knowledge, and accumulating as much knowledge as possible. The second approach is to encourage critical thinking in order to challenge existing norms and values, as endorsed by Plato. The third traditional approach is whole-child learning, supported by well-known Rosseau, which takes into consideration the child’s natural interests in learning topics and activities.

Egan argues that these ideas are incompatible, with the missing aspect being supporting internal intellectual development and reflexivity – thinking about one’s own thinking. Egan & Gajdamaschko (2003) argue that the Imaginative Education approach solves the incompatibilities between the three fore-mentioned theorists. The alternative conception is to consider the mind a “social and cultural organ,” and using cognitive tools supports the cultural development of the mind. Egan’s theory of education is different from Piaget’s model of stages of psychological development because it integrates developmental stages and cognitive thinking into an educational approach: the cognitive tools. Vygotsky saw the mind as a “psychological and cultural organ” and the cognitive tools are developed from “what people are naturally drawn to at the time of development” (p. 6).
The cognitive tools are used in stages: pre-language (Somatic understanding), oral language (Mythic understanding), written language (Romantic understanding, theoretical thinking (Philosophic understanding) and reflexive thinking (Ironic understanding). If introduced correctly, cognitive tools of literacy focusing on developing Romantic Understanding help develop imagination, self-reflection, emotions, and awareness of a child’s own thinking. Egan identifies some cognitive tools of literacy: limits and extremes of reality, association with the heroic, image and concept, idealism and revolt, humanizing knowledge, the narrative mind, and details. Furthermore, Egan provides examples and contexts where these cognitive tools can be applied to learning and texts in the classroom.


According to Jones, “all writers write their lives” (p. 64) and “writing immerses writers in semiotic paradigms” (Halliday, 1999 as cited by Jones, 2015, p. 64). Echoing Vygotsky, writing, a form of language, helps children make meaning. Therefore, writing can be considered a social tool. Furthermore, “writing represents inner speech that bridges through and spoken language” (p. 65).

Although writing is a powerful language tool and skill developed at school, not all writing activities are not enjoyable for all children. Many children do not see “school writing” and “home writing” the same way (p. 65). School writing is considered less meaningful, with more constraints and focus on grammar and conventions, whereas home writing is more “fluid, organic, and interactive” (p. 65). Jones argues that “authentic literary activities replicate or reflect reading activities that occur outside of a learning to read and write context” (Duke et al., 2006, as cited in Jones, 2015, p. 65).

Jones proposes that the two elements of effective writing are purpose or function, which is communication, meaningful expression of individual voice, through a real-world text such as blogs, news, brochures, poems, and stories. Worksheets should be avoided and are not considered authentic, effective writing activities.
In her study surveying students about the writing activities they did or did not enjoy, Jones revealed that the activities students did enjoy included letter or note writing, creative writing, writing about learning about the world, and writing about personal activities and interests.

On the other hand, students did not enjoy school-based journal writing, drills explaining their thinking process, and writing for assessment. Students also revealed facing “challenges related to the demands, restrictions, and expectations around writing at school” (p. 71).

Some of the frustrations or challenges students experienced included worrying about having enough time, generating ideas, and organizing ideas. The frustrations were reduced by drawing before writing, having choice in representation, multimodal processes, more time and less pressure, sharing work with an audience, and more cross-curricular thematic integration.


This article explains the types of engagement: affective, behavioural, cognitive, and dynamic, why engagement is important, and tasks that can produce better engagement in students. The study discussed in the article ranks the most engaging and the least engaging tasks as determined by students. The results of this study show that the most engaging tasks for students included authenticity, collaboration, and choice. Students reported disengagement when tasks were too difficult, or confusing, and had little involvement. The article also gives tips for teachers how to make tasks more engaging for students including multimodal displays (texts and visuals), increasing graphic organizer use, and focusing on interesting elements of the content. Interestingly, many of these suggestions align with the cognitive tools of the literate eye, affective mental imagery, oral stories, extremes of limits and reality, and overall, finding the emotional significance of a topic through story.

**SECTION III: ACTION RESEARCH DESIGN**

**RESEARCH QUESTION(S)**

The central research question that guided my data collection is “What are the effects of incorporating cognitive tools in the classroom?”
The additional supporting questions were:

- What are the effects of using IE strategies on learning and engagement?
- How do students respond to cognitive tools as a teaching strategy?
- How do teachers feel about using cognitive tools in their teaching practice?

RESEARCH SITE

The site of my research project was an elementary school in Surrey, BC. I conducted my research in a classroom of 25 grade 7 students. Their regular classroom teacher has expressed that many of her students are struggling with literacy (reading and writing skills) at their grade level. Participants include the division of grade 7 students and their classroom teacher.

My research is qualitative in nature for many reasons. My topic, “What are the effects of incorporating cognitive tools in the classroom?” is specific to my teaching context and interests and cannot be generalized to each and every classroom. Rather, my findings pertain to the class that I was working with at the time, and only to my individual action research project. In this way, I acknowledge that my research is subjective, as are the findings, because they have been interpreted by me. Though I have used a variety of data collection methods to ensure reliable results, I have come into this research project with my own beliefs, assumptions, and hopes for education and my topic.

As a teacher, I believe it is not possible to separate yourself from your research when you are working with students. I chose to be involved in creating lessons, activities, and delivering them to students because developing trusting relationships with students is important for creating a positive working environment. Any teacher could agree that the quality of instruction for the students comes before any of my research needs, and students need to feel safe and supported in a classroom in order to be honest, open, and free to take risks in their learning. This is especially important for the surveys that I had students complete as part of my data collection on their thoughts and feelings about their engagement in my lesson activities. I wanted students to feel comfortable answering these questions honestly in order for my data to be reliable and valid.
METHODOLOGY

My inquiry question, "what are the effects of using cognitive tools in the classroom?" is intentionally open to allow me to observe how students receive and respond to the lessons incorporating the cognitive tools.

Observation: I observed how students responded to the activities that were designed incorporating cognitive tools. I recorded my observations and reflections on those observations in a notebook. I recorded what I noticed about which students were engaged, and when, using indicators of engagement including interest (verbal expressions, discussions are on topic), time and effort (boredom from task, submitting incomplete work).

Exit Tickets/Surveys: After each lesson I taught, I distributed “exit tickets” or surveys which asked students specific questions about their interest, engagement, and overall feelings about the lesson and activities for feedback.

Interviews: Interviews with the teacher, both formal and informal, gave me insight on the students, and what the classroom teacher notices about students' learning since she knows them best.

Samples of students work & photos: I collected samples of students’ responses to questionnaires that I distributed, as well as their work using the cognitive tools. I also took photos of an activity for my records and reflections.

My action research project was based on my own observations and reflections, samples of student work, questionnaires, interviews with teacher, and photographs of students’ work. The inquiry project took place during school instruction time.

SECTION IV: RESULTS

Observations Before IE Integration in the Classroom

Students were given their English Language Arts unit for the next few weeks on short stories, which was a booklet explaining parts of a story. The parts were divided into pages including “interesting characters,” “conflict,” and “setting” (see Appendix). The teacher led the students in a discussion about what makes a good short story. Students brainstormed that good short stories “show, and do not tell,” convey emotions, have interesting characters, and are unpredictable, or
keep the reader guessing. These were the expectations for students’ short stories that they would be writing.

Next, students brainstormed what does not make a good short story with the teacher, with answers including: poor writing, repeating words, telling (rather than showing through description), not explaining well, and rushing the ending. Students were given a lot of information, through my observations, about what their short stories should include to be considered a “good” short story. In the next step, students filled out a questionnaire based on their short story character or protagonist as part of the planning process (see Appendix). There were many questions, and it was unclear how many students needed to fill out, or whether they were choosing to answer the ones that were interesting to them. The activity instructions were simple enough and step by step, students worked away on answering the questions about their character. As an observer, I wondered how many of them had a character in mind before they began the activity, or whether they were making up responses, and thus, making up characteristics as they went along.

As students were answering the questions, I wondered if there was a more engaging way to teach students about character – something more interactive, perhaps?

After silent reading, students continued on the character questions after lunch with a double block of English Language Arts. The students seemed less focused now with more chatter and a longer time to get settled. How effective was the break in between? Did it give students a chance to take a break, refresh their minds, and continue working on the activity? Or did it do the opposite, take their attentions away from the task at hand and make it harder for them to re-focus?

As they neared the end of the day, students could also be feeling tired. I noticed one student in particular who was having a difficult time sitting in his seat and focusing on the task. He was often out of his seat visiting his peers. At the end of the work period, the teacher commended and read out a student sample to the class as an idea of what her expectations were.
LESSON #1: Developing Conflict in Short Stories Scavenger Hunt

I decided to plan and deliver a lesson incorporating the cognitive tools of mythic and romantic understanding during English Language Arts period this day. The lesson (see Appendix) was a review on internal and external conflicts in stories. The lesson was planned with the intentional use of elements that increase collaboration as indicated by Parsons (2015): choice, collaboration, and multimodal representation such as graphic organizers. Interestingly, graphic organizers were one of the cognitive tools I incorporated from Romantic Understanding, as Egan points out that Romantic cognitive tools are best for literacy engagement. The other cognitive tools in this lesson were sense of wonder and puzzle and mystery.

On the board, I had drawn a table titled “Types of Conflicts in Movies & TV Shows” which looked like this:

Table 1. Types of Conflict in TV Shows & Movies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conflict Type</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Person vs. person</td>
<td>Ex: Batman vs. Joker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person vs. self</td>
<td>Ex: Tangled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person vs. nature</td>
<td>Ex: The Lorax</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As a review, I asked students to define each type of conflict: person vs. person, person vs. self, and person vs. nature. I had one student define each type, and they were easily able to do so because they had spent some time studying types of conflict previously in the class. Next, we went over each example of movie that I had written in the table, and I asked students to tell me HOW the conflict is present in the film. Again, the same 2-3 students raised their hands to answer this question as well. I wondered whether it was because the others were shy, did not feel comfortable answering questions, or had not seen the movies. All students have been studying conflict before this lesson and were expected to know. During the discussion, students appeared to be engaged: no other conversations among peers, all eyes were on me, and students were taking notes (to my surprise).
Students were divided into groups of 4-5 students and given chart paper. They were asked to create a similar graphic organizer on their chart papers and come up with as many titles of movies and TV shows as they could think of for each category. Students got to work immediately, and it was actually quite noisy in the classroom but the discussions were on topic. At the very least, students were eager to talk about the movies they have seen. Groups had organized themselves as one individual who was responsible for drawing the chart and writing in responses, and the others contributed ideas. It was good collaboration, an important aspect of engagement.

When students had finished completing their charts, I asked each group to share their responses and we completed the table on the board together with students’ answers. Superhero movies dominated the board.

*Samples of student charts:*
Next, the students were shown a YouTube clip as a multimodal visual and audio tool with examples of a movie for each type of conflict and their next activity: writing a short story using a
simple math equation CHARACTER + DESIRE + CONFLICT = STORY. We discussed how each movie example shown in the video clip had followed this formula. For example, we discussed that in Tangled, Rapunzel had the desire to leave the castle to attain freedom but was afraid to anger her mother. In this next activity, students were to choose a character from the list, choose a goal (desire), and a conflict. They were to write a short story based on their choices. I included choice in this activity to increase engagement. Students took some time to select their story elements and began quietly writing.

Samples of students’ stories:

Once upon a time there was a astronaut stuck in space and his goal was to get back to earth and his problem was that he didn’t have a way to get back to earth. One day the astronaut found a planet with a lot of junk on it he starts to make that way and when he got on it there was herd life from the life from had fire and metal so he started to build a ship but he forgot that he needs fuel but where would he get fuel from? So he asked the life froms and they said you need to go on the big mountain and the the water from there and we will give you fuel so the astronaut went to the mountain and got the water and came back and they gave him the fuel and then the astronaut went home.
Screams, fight, and total boredom. That’s all there is to a prison. No entertainment; no nothing. In the prison I’m in, all I think about is how I could have done something—just one small little gesture of support and he would be alive. Instead, I stood there while he was disembodied and bled to death.

I’m known as the “Freak Killer” around here. My name is Hailee, though. I’m in prison for being a part of first degree murder. I didn’t commit the murder, but I did watch as it occurred. Since I didn’t do anything to help, I was put in jail and sentenced 20 years in this dull gray looking jail.

I’m miserable in here; the woman who committed the crime is sharing the same cell as me. Even if I tried, I can’t forget what I’ve seen because the murderer, Salia, won’t let me. Anytime we’re together she talks about how thrilling disemboweling the boy was. Yup, she’s a psycho.

I’m telling you my life story because I’m going for far away. I will not ever come back, even if I wanted to. This is my last day here in jail and in this world. It’s time for me to go...
At the end of the lesson, I distributed a survey called an “exit ticket” as part of my data. Students were asked to complete the optional survey anonymously (no names on it), and hand back to me when finished. The survey asked 3 questions:

1. On a scale of 1-5 (1-lowest, 5-highest), how interesting was this lesson?
2. What activity did you enjoy the most?
3. What did you learn about the topic through this lesson?

The results looked like this:

*Conflict Lesson Survey Responses*

![Engagement Level Rating - Types of Conflict Lesson](chart.png)

The results show that out of 21 students who participated in the survey, all of them gave the lesson an engagement and interest level rating of 3 or higher out of 5 possible points. Four students who added a half-point rating were omitted from the results, as some students did not know they could give half points and would skew the results. To me, 3 out of 5 for engagement was
a good indication that the lesson was engaging for students but could be made even more engaging.

The second question on the survey was “What activity did you enjoy the most?” The responses were:

1. Writing the story (9 students)
2. Group work (7 students)
3. Watching the YouTube clip (4 students)
4. Making the chart (4 students)

The third question on the survey was “What did you learn about the topic through this lesson?” Students responses varied between the following:

1. I learned the types of conflicts
2. I learned I need to write more details
3. I learned how to make my writing more interesting
4. I learned that a story needs a conflict

**DISCUSSION**

I was pleasantly surprised to see that most students enjoyed writing the story and the group work, which aligns with Parsons’ comments about students feeling most engaged when collaborating with their peers. Students’ interactions with each other and conversations regarding the topic demonstrated to me that they were focused on the task, which was an indicator of engagement for me. Students were excited to share their responses from their charts.

I also observed that students were much quieter during the writing activity towards the end of the lesson. Interesting, the cognitive tool of the literate eye, the chart, used in this lesson was not as engaging for students as the other activities.

Almost all of the students indicated some response about learning about conflict in writing, and how to strengthen short story writing in general, which indicates to me that they were engaged enough to understand the purpose of the lesson (at the very minimal level).
LESSON #2: Descriptive Writing in Short Stories

The next lesson’s topic was incorporating descriptive language into writing. Their classroom teacher has taught students how to “show, not tell” when writing by including lots of description of characters and setting. The question was not whether students understood the content, but rather, how engaged they were during the lesson and which parts of the lesson were the most and least interesting for students.

The lesson incorporated the cognitive tools of games and play, affective mental imagery and change of context. Students were asked to imagine that they were on a game show, where they needed to complete a mission. The mission was called “The Descriptive Writing Challenge,” and each level in the mission needed to be complete as “descriptive writers” before moving onto the next. Students were encouraged to be as descriptive as possible in each challenge using their five senses. The students were given three challenges on a Power Point Presentation. The first challenge was to find an object in their desks and list as many adjectives or words to describe the object they picked as they can think of.

The next challenge was for students to close their eyes and listen to a reading of a descriptive story. Then, students were to draw a picture recalling as many of the details as they could and draw the picture they had in their minds as they listened to the story. Finally, the final mission for students to complete was to look at the image on the slide with their eyes, ears, mouth and noses and write a paragraph about what they see using the five senses – again, being as descriptive as possible. Once students completed these three activities, they had completed their mission as Descriptive Writers!

Samples of students’ work:
Challenge #1
blue sharp small grey metallic hair thick cog nub

Challenge #2

Challenge #3
It has a jungly smell with the grass and the cool breeze. You could hear the elephants, breeze and the bugs. I see big, twisty trees and some big roots. It wouldn’t be a good idea to taste the grass or elephants. It would feel a bit cold and the grass would be as soft as a baby’s skin. As for the elephants their skin would be scaly, bumpy and thick.
I see gray elephants
and green grass and a bright yellow sun
and the trees are green and I think
the grass tastes like dust and it feels
like little ants are going up your
foot. The elephants are making loud noises and
they have white horns. The trees
smell like honey and they taste like bark
and the look like it has been there for so
long. The sky is blue and a little
bit cloudy. There is a mountain in the
background and a little bit of snow. The elephants
are and there is 5 elephants. These
elephants smell like clove. They
give bush in the back where the trees and
the elephant smell like clove because
they always take showers with their
trunks.
Challenge #2
The gigantic elephants roam the plain, not Cameroon. They soak up the small amounts of water and stand in line under the bright blue sky. The trees branch out beautifully, providing shade and coolness. The grey elephants stamping sound like distant drums. The sun’s warmth brushes against their rough skin as they are in search for water. The lime green grass cracks under the weight of the elephant. The sun’s rays illuminate across the Savanna, their long trunks slide across the burning, hot Savanna.
When the lesson was finished, students completed and submitted a voluntary survey about the lesson and their engagement.

These are the following student responses to the survey:

1. The activities I completed today helped me learn how to write using descriptive language: Agree / Disagree / Somewhat Disagree / Disagree

   ![Bar chart showing student responses to the survey question.]

   - Agree: 11 students
   - Somewhat Agree: 9 students
   - Somewhat Disagree: 2 students
   - Disagree: 0 students

2. I would rate the “Descriptive Writing Challenge” activity as:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engaging</th>
<th>Not Engaging</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. The MOST interesting or exciting part of the lesson for me was...
4. The LEAST interesting or exciting part of the lesson for me was...

*Note: 1 student liked listening to the descriptive story, but not drawing what they imagined afterwards.

**DISCUSSION**

Majority of the students (19) agreed that the lesson helped them writing using descriptive language, which was the goal of the lesson. Similar to the first survey, most students rated the lesson as a ‘3’ or higher for engagement, and this time, most students rated the lesson a 4 out of 5 possible points for engagement.

The lesson utilized the cognitive tool of games and play, which could account for why students found it more engaging than the previous lesson which employed graphic organizers as a cognitive tool. The activity also had an element of challenge and competition. The surveys were anonymous to encourage students to be honest in their feedback, however, it would have been interesting to see how boys rated the lesson vs. girls.
The favourite activity was Challenge #2 which involved students listening to a guided visualization of a narrative, and then drawing what they imagined in their minds. This challenge utilized the cognitive tool of affective mental imagery and narratization which students found more appealing than the other cognitive tools, which was a graphic organizer from the literate eye. Challenge #3, which involved examining an image of elephants in the African savannah, came as a close second favourite, and students were asked to write a description of what they see using the five senses. The least favourite challenge or activity among this group was listing as many adjectives as students could think of to describe an object in their desk. I suspect this task was too easy, and that students did not see the value in completing it. In my observations of students during this first activity I noticed that students were laughing, were chatty, and overall being silly. While some students were taking the activity seriously, a group of boys appeared to be disengaged. It was a clue that this activity was not the most effective way to use the cognitive tools collections and lists. Although Parsons encourages the use of graphic organizers to engage students, the trend for this particular group of students is that other forms of representation such as images and stories were more appealing or engaging.

The change of pace for students could also have been an important factor in engagement that could be investigated further. Whereas in my observations before integrating IE into the classroom students were reading a single document and working on a single activity for an extensive period of time, they were now being presented information multimodally through stories, images, videos, etc. They were also transitioning from one activity to the next in a much shorter amount of time and overall appeared to be more engaging. Furthermore, employing the cognitive tool of game and play demonstrated to be engaging for students.

**LESSON #3: Year End Reflection**

For this lesson, the classroom teacher was asked to facilitate and reflect on her experience using cognitive tools as a teacher who has never used Imaginative Education in her practice before. The lesson structure began by having the teacher explain to students what the STORY or "why this worth doing?" behind a year-end reflection activity. Students are engaging in this reflection because we can think of each school year, or even all our elementary years as a JOURNEY. They
have a goal in mind (graduating) and they work toward that goal. They have certain expectations for how they will get there, but sometimes they face setbacks but they need to re-assess, make changes, and continue on their journey to reach their destination. But what matters more than the destination, is the journey along the way. This is where they grow as a learner.

Whenever we teach an imaginative lesson, we want to tell students the story or "why does this matter?" behind the lesson. So, why does this reflection matter? Because school is a JOURNEY, and whenever you accomplish something, you should reflect on what your expectations were, what you did along the way, and where you are now.

The teacher distributed the reflections and discussed the directions with students. They read the activity together. Students were expected to draw an emoji or symbol (doesn't have to be a face, it can be an object) to represent how they FEEL when thinking about the question. Then, they wrote a couple of sentences to respond to the question as truthfully as possible.

The Cognitive Tools incorporated into the lesson included:

- a) Metaphor - school as a journey of growth
- b) Images/symbols - using emojis to represent emotions
- c) Narratizing and personalizing - activity is personal to individual students
- d) Extremes and limits - questions on most favourite/least favourite aspects

**TEACHER’S REFLECTION ON IE**

To investigate the teacher’s experience using cognitive tools for the first time, the regular classroom teacher was asked a series of interview questions to document her experience incorporating cognitive tools in her teaching practice. Her responses were as follows.

What strategies do you currently use for student engagement?

“Strategies I have used for student engagement include meaningful, collaborative and project-based learning, integration of technology, inquiry-based learning, discussion forums, and art.”
How effective do you believe your current strategies are?

“A combination and range of these strategies has proved to be effective, however, I recognize the importance and value of exploring new approaches.”

Through observing my lesson(s), what have you noticed as different, new, or exciting about the Imaginative Education approach?

“I particularly enjoyed the story context in which the lessons were set-up. I have found stories help students to remember things by making knowledge more engaging and the use of metaphors, images and symbols enabled students to understand one thing by seeing it in terms of another.”

What have you noticed about your students’ engagement in activities using the Imaginative approach?

“I found students were able to easily connect to the material presented and were able to actively and meaningfully engage with the activities.”

What did you know about the Imaginative Education approach before beginning the inquiry project, and how has your knowledge changed after?

“I was unaware of the Imaginative Education approach prior to the information and lessons provided by you [Ms. Shahi]. I have developed a simplistic understanding of this particular approach but, am able to recognize its value and would like to further explore and potentially implement it into my own teaching practice.”

Do you believe your teaching practice was positively supported through the Imaginative Education approach? If so, in what ways?

“Yes, I believe my teaching practice was positively supported through the IE approach. It was evidenced through my students’ level of engagement and work produced where, I can easily see that they were motivated and interested in the material presented and thereby, are likely to have learned effectively.”
Do you believe the students benefited from the strategies implemented through the Imaginative Education approach? Why or why not?

“Yes, I believe students benefited from the strategies implemented through the IE approach as it allowed them to engage with subject material in a meaningful manner through the use of story, feeling and figurative language while developing their literacy skills simultaneously.”

SECTION V: CONCLUSIONS

In an earlier section, I listed my research questions. In my conclusions, I will attempt to answer my research questions based on the results of my action research.

a) How do students respond to cognitive tools as a teaching strategy?

The observed effects of integrating cognitive tools into students’ learning activities included fun and competition among classmates when using game and play as a tool to learn about descriptive writing, though games do not always have to be competitive. Furthermore, students indicated they felt mostly engaged during the activities incorporating cognitive tools with a rating of 3/5 or higher. This is a good indication that students were enjoying the lessons and enjoyed learning with the cognitive tool strategies. It can be said, however, that not all students enjoy learning with all cognitive tools, or all topics. Furthermore, students enjoyed using graphic organizers in groups, where they could collaborate with their peers, more than using graphic organizers individually.

Without actually naming the cognitive tools with the students, they had indicated to me in their surveys about what activities they enjoyed or did not enjoy. These students enjoyed using multimodal texts such as stories, images and videos, as well as collaboration and roleplay or change of context as a learning strategy much more than simply organizing information into a graphic organizer. The literate eye was not a favourite among this group when using them individually, however, it can be acknowledged that not all cognitive tools work for the same way for every student. It may be the case that some students respond well to particular cognitive tools
and find them engaging, while some may not. This was evident in students’ varying responses about which activities employing different cognitive tools they enjoyed the most and the least.

**b) How do teachers feel about incorporating cognitive tools (and IE) in their teaching practice?**

My teaching partner in this action research project revealed that she felt the aspect of story in Imaginative Education, inviting students to explore the question “why does this matter?” before they learn about a particular topic, was a powerful one. She had used the metaphor of school as a journey in her facilitation of the Year-End Assessment lesson. Furthermore, in her observations, students received the metaphor positively and she noted that students appeared to be interested in the activity. Overall, she has indicated in her responses that the Imaginative Education made topics more “meaningful” and there is value in trying new or different approaches to teach material, even if you believe your current strategies are effective. Teachers should not stop finding ways to improve their practice and it could be the case that Imaginative Education teaches you more about the ways your students learn, and which strategies they respond best to enhance and enrich classroom learning experiences.

**c) What are the effects of using IE strategies on learning and engagement?**

Using surveys with students can sometimes be a tricky concept because often, students give responses that will please the teacher, and avoid being critical so not to hurt the teacher’s feelings. The fact that some students may have given the activity a higher rating for engagement that was actually felt cannot be overlooked. Students were asked to be honest as possible, and the surveys were kept anonymous to encourage honesty. Nevertheless, from the responses from students indicated that at no time, were students not engaged. Majority of students also indicated the lessons were interesting to them. All students who participated in the survey indicated they were mostly engaged with a 3 out 5 or higher. It can be the case that factors such as time of day (in the morning before lunch or after lunch, afternoon) can affect levels of students’ engagement because levels of engagement fluctuate throughout the day. When students are feeling tired, they are less
likely to be engaged. To minimize variations in the time, the lessons were taught during students’ regular English Language Arts period between recess and lunch.

To summarize, two important lessons I learned from my action research are:

1. Not all cognitive tools are engaging all of the time. Some students may find them engaging for a particular lesson activity or task, while others may not. It could be the way they are integrated or introduced, or too challenging or not challenging enough. For example, students enjoyed using graphic organizers in group activities, but not individually.

2. Engagement levels can fluctuate throughout the day. I found that students were tired but willing to listen in the morning before recess, the most engaged and productive between recess and lunch, and less productive and chattier after lunch. Activities should be planned with this in mind. While an individual writing activity may be better in the morning, a collaborative game could engage students better in the afternoon.

SECTION VI: IMPLICATIONS

After learning about the cognitive tools and the Imaginative Education approach of emotional connection to a topic, teachers may think they have used these strategies already for engagement. In teacher education, we call this a “hook” to a topic. What makes a hook different from emotional connection? Imaginative Education encourages teachers to find the awe or wonder in a topic and convey that to students. It is not simply a question to hook students, but the story behind the topic and what makes it worth investigating. Teachers may also think they have used cognitive tools such as images, drama, games, or humour as a few examples in the way they present information and design activities. This is great! Cognitive tools are not necessarily “new” strategies, very little if anything is a “new” concept in education. Rather, the cognitive tool approach gives teachers a purpose for the strategies they are using, which is to encourage engagement through emotional connection. How many times have we procrastinated while writing an essay for school, or even grading essays, and yet, when we are working on a personal
project at home, we can spend hours working without realizing it. Students are more likely to put more effort and care into their work, if they are engaged through emotional connection.

With that being said, not all cognitive tools will work with all students or classes. Some students may respond to one cognitive tool with more engagement than another but trying a new approach such as Imaginative Education is worth it if it makes learning more enjoyable and more meaningful and more “WONDER-ful” for students. You may find that you are already using cognitive tools in some way – that’s great! Find what’s worth learning in a topic, show students the “story” behind it, and try out some more tools and see what happens.

Furthermore, it is unclear what the relationship between introducing the cognitive tools and students’ literacy skills are for a research project of this scope. Although I did not investigate this question directly, if there is a relationship between using the cognitive tools and literacy skills, a longitudinal study could more accurately show students’ progress over time. However, as discussed earlier in this report, student engagement has a significant impact on student achievement as Parsons (2015) explains, especially in reading achievement. For future research, it would be interesting to study how cognitive tools affect literacy skills over the school year in a given context, indirectly through increased engagement.

SECTION VII: REFLECTIONS

“Seeing what happens” is precisely what my intention was for my action research project. I spent the past ten months learning about Imaginative Education and the cognitive tools, designing engaging lessons and activities for potential students, but I never had the opportunity to teach utilizing the strategies I learned as a teacher-on-call. This action research project was an opportunity for me to apply what I have learned and see for myself what the effects of incorporating this approach is to my practice and for students’ learning experiences.

I was able to work with a great group of Grade 7 students for this research project, many of whom were struggling with their reading and writing and skills. I wanted the students to benefit from my action research project in some way, therefore, I wanted to focus on the cognitive tools of literacy developing Romantic Understanding.
There were some benefits and challenges that I experienced during the course of my action research project. While designing a specific, coherent action research plan requires a great amount of focus, getting approval from the school district to work with students was more challenging than I had considered. Ultimately, however, it was an invaluable learning experience for me as a novice researcher. I gained a better understanding of what is expected from an action-researcher, and that ethics are of utmost important when researching, especially with vulnerable young students. Executing the action research plan I had intended was another challenge. I accepted that in action research, it is important to reflect on your data and make suitable changes even if it takes your research in a direction you had not originally intended. While my original research question was to observe whether cognitive tools integration can improve literacy, I quickly realized that it would require much more time than I had for a longitudinal student such as this. Furthermore, I did not feel comfortable assessing students I had not previously taught (except for one occasion as a teacher on call) for improvement in reading, writing, and critical thinking.

This experience was highly beneficial for me, not only because I was able to work an energetic, dynamic, and sweet group of students and one awesome teacher who welcomed me into their classroom without hesitation, but it was invaluable learning experience on formally conducting action research.
REFERENCES


APPENDICES
Mythic Imaginative Education Brainstorming Chart
(The Cognitive Tools of Orality)

Forming Images
- Descriptive Writing Challenge
- Descriptive Drawing
- Examining Image w/ 5 Senses
- Symbols & Emojis in Reflection

Rhyme and Rhythm

Binary Opposites

Games and Drama
- Descriptive Writing Challenge

Joking and Humour

Metaphor
- "School as a Journey"
- Year End Reflection

Mystery and Puzzles
- Find TV Shows & Movies
- Fitting Types of Conflicts
  (Scavenger Hunt)
Short Stories Unit

Romantic Imaginative Education Brainstorming Chart
(The Cognitive tools of Literacy)

Humanizing of Meaning and Personification
- Year End Reflection - Personalized Responses

Change of Context and Role Play
- Descriptive Writing Challenge Game Show + Contestants/Video Game

Revolt and Idealism

Heroic Quality

Extremes and Limits
- Most to Least Interesting/Engaging Activities

Collections and Sets
- List Adj's Describing Object

The Literate Eye and Graphic Organizers
- Table/Chart Types of Conflicts in TV Shows/Movies

Narrative

Narrative

Narrative

Narrative

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Interview Questions for the Grade 7 Teacher

1. What strategies do you currently use for student engagement?

2. How effective do you believe your current strategies are?

3. Through observing my lesson(s), what have you noticed as different, new, or exciting about the Imaginative Education approach?

4. What have you noticed about your students’ engagement in activities using the Imaginative approach?

5. What did you know about the Imaginative Education approach before beginning the inquiry project, and how has your knowledge changed after?

6. Do you believe your teaching practice was positively supported through the Imaginative Education approach? If so, in what ways?

7. Do you believe the students benefited from the strategies implemented through the Imaginative Education approach? Why or why not?
Lesson: Creating conflict in short stories (elements of a story)
Grade: 7
Teacher: Rita Shahi
Cognitive tools employed: the literate eye (table), story, sense of wonder, puzzle/mystery

LESSON STRUCTURE (60 mins)

Introduction: Go over/discuss types of conflict in the handout with students.
   Review the types of conflicts with students.

Activities:
1. Create a table on the board titled “Types of Conflict in Movies/TV Shows” with a list of
types of conflict in each row.

   | Person vs. person       | Ex: Batman vs. Joker |
   | Person vs. self         | Ex: Tangled (Rapunzel’s freedom) |
   | Person vs. nature       | Ex: The Lorax (No trees) |

2. Divide the class into groups of 4-5, and have them come up with titles of tv shows, and
   movies that show each of these kinds of conflicts.
3. Have one member in each group come up to the board and write them in the table.
4. Show clip: Types of conflict in movies:
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5tF6mA0vmA8 and discuss.
5. Introduce to students that stories follow a simple formula: CHARACTER + DESIRE +
   CONFLICT = STORY
6. Have each student pick a CHARACTER, A GOAL, AND A CONFLICT from the list
   given. They must write a 10-minute story using any of the types of conflicts we’ve
   learned, about a character who wants to achieve something, but has a problem
   (outrageous, silly, random prompts)
7. Have a few volunteers to share their stories with the class
8. Distribute exit ticket to students and collect
A wants B but can’t have it because of C, or in other words...

**Character + Desire + Conflict = Story**

**Step 1:** Pick a character!
**Step 2:** Pick a goal for your character! What do they want to do/achieve?
**Step 3:** Pick a conflict! What is holding your character back from achieving their goal(s)?
**Step 4:** Write, write, write! You have 10 minutes to write your story. Don’t worry if it’s not perfect.
**Step 5:** Share your story with your classmates! Listen to everyone’s stories!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PICK A CHARACTER:</th>
<th>PICK A GOAL:</th>
<th>PICK A CONFLICT:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A prison inmate</td>
<td>A milkshake</td>
<td>Has severe allergies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A puppy</td>
<td>To see her daughter</td>
<td>Is afraid of strangers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A high school student</td>
<td>To be an astronaut</td>
<td>Is very shy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A flight attendant</td>
<td>To fall in love</td>
<td>Is a high school drop out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A bank teller</td>
<td>To get a tattoo</td>
<td>Is afraid of heights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A butcher</td>
<td>To be famous</td>
<td>Has seventeen cats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A dog walker</td>
<td>To win the lottery</td>
<td>Is germophobic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A plane crash survivor</td>
<td>To travel the world</td>
<td>Is addicted to video games</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A prosecutor</td>
<td>To join the circus</td>
<td>Is still in love with his/her ex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An ER nurse</td>
<td>To get married</td>
<td>Is a spy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Prime Minister</td>
<td>To learn how to fly a plane</td>
<td>Is stranded on a desert island</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An astronaut</td>
<td>To move to a new city</td>
<td>Has lost their memory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A vampire</td>
<td>To solve a crime</td>
<td>Is Invisible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A bus driver</td>
<td>To learn to read</td>
<td>Is overwhelmingly lonely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An aspiring author</td>
<td>To get a college scholarship</td>
<td>Is a bully</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A salesman</td>
<td>To be brave</td>
<td>Is lost at sea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A research scientist</td>
<td>To be on a reality TV show</td>
<td>Is too lazy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A librarian</td>
<td>To forget the past</td>
<td>Is being chased by zombies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A school teacher</td>
<td>To be a hero</td>
<td>Is stuck in traffic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Exit Ticket Survey #1

1. On a scale of 1-5 (1-lowest, 5-highest), how interesting was this lesson?

2. What activity did you enjoy the most?

3. What did you learn about the topic through this lesson?
Exit Ticket Survey #2

Read the statement below, then circle one of the responses:

1. The activities I completed today helped me learn how to write using descriptive language
   Circle ONE: Agree / Somewhat Agree / Somewhat Disagree / Disagree

2. I would rate the “Descriptive Writing Challenge” activity as (circle ONE):

   Not Engaging                                      Very Engaging
   1               2               3               4               5

3. The most interesting/exciting part of the lesson for me was:

4. The least interesting/exciting part of the lesson for me was:
Lesson: End of Year Imaginative Assessment/Questionnaire

Instruction:

1. Begin by explaining to students what the STORY or "why this worth doing?" behind the reflection activity. Students are engaging in this reflection because we can think of each school year, or even all our elementary years as a JOURNEY. You have a goal in mind (graduating) and you work toward that goal. You have certain expectations for how you will get there, but sometimes you face set backs but you need to re-assess, make changes, and continue on your journey to reach your destination. But what matters more than the destination, is the journey along the way. This is where you grow as a learner!

[This is an example of an IMAGINATIVE ASSESSMENT. I incorporated cognitive tools into the assessment/questionnaire. Whenever we teach an imaginative lesson, we want to tell students the story or "why does this matter?" behind the lesson. So, why does this reflection matter? Because school is a JOURNEY, and whenever you accomplish something, you should reflect on what your expectations were, what you did along the way, and where you are now.]

2. Distribute the handout and go over the directions with students. Read it together. Students will draw an emoji or symbol (doesn't have to be a face, it can be an object) to represent how they FEEL when thinking about the question. Then, they will write a couple of sentences to respond to the question as truthfully as possible.

3. Collect the questionnaires when completed.

The Cognitive Tools I incorporated into the lesson:

a) Metaphor - school as a journey of growth
b) Images/symbols - using emojis to represent emotions
c) Narratizing and personalizing - activity is personal to individual students
d) Extremes and limits - questions on most favourite/least favourite aspects
Congratulations! You are near the end of your journey in elementary school, and you are about to embark on an exciting new journey into high school. You may be feeling a sense of accomplishment, or you may be feeling nostalgic or overwhelmed. Or you may be feeling a mix of emotions. That is okay, and normal even! As you part ways with elementary school, reflect on your grade 7 year. What were your expectations for the year? What did you hope to learn? What topics interested you at the beginning of the year? What are you interested in now? What did you do well on? What can you grow and improve on for next year?

Directions: Read and reflect on each question below. Draw an emoji in the box next to the question and explain your reason for choosing this emoji. Write a few sentences for your response to each question.

1. What did you hope or expect to learn this year in grade 7?

2. What were your MOST favourite topics or activities that you learned?

3. What were your LEAST favourite topics or activities that you learned?

4. What strategies used by your teacher were most effective (ex: pictures/visuals, charts or tables, lists, group work, discussion, reading aloud, oral directions, etc.)
5. What strategies used by your teacher were the least effective? (Did not help you)

6. What was the most memorable thing you did this year?

7. What are your hopes for next year in high school?

8. What are some things you can grow or improve on for next year and beyond?
LET'S GET STARTED! HERE WE GO:

• You will be given 3 challenges to successfully complete your mission as descriptive writers!
• You must complete each challenge to move onto the next one. Remember, you have limited time so you need to have focus!
• All of your work will be handed in at the end of the mission.
• The goal here is to try to be as descriptive in your writing as possible, using your imagination to see pictures in your mind, using lots of different adjectives to describe objects and images, and activating the 5 senses!
CHALLENGE #1

• Step 1: Find an object in your desk. It can be anything – a pencil, pen, eraser, book, ruler, etc.
• Step 2: On a blank piece of paper, write down as many ADJECTIVES as you can to describe it using the 5 senses.
• What are adjectives? Words that describe a noun (colour, shape, size, etc.)
• What are the 5 senses?
  – Sight (What does it look like physically?)
  – Smell (What does it smell like?)
  – Touch (What does it feel like? Texture? Temperature? Etc.)
  – Hear (What sound does it make? What if you move it across your desk, does it make a sound?)
  – Taste (Please DO NOT lick or eat it. Take a guess on what you think it might taste like!)

GREAT WORK!

HERE’S THE NEXT CHALLENGE...
CHALLENGE #2:

- Step 1: Your teacher will read the description on the next slide. You do not have to read it.
- Step 2: You will close your eyes and listen carefully as it is being read to you. Try to focus your mind on the words being spoken and nothing else around you or what you are going to do after school today.
- Step 3: You will then draw a picture of what you see in your mind’s eye.
- Step 4: Your teacher will read the descriptive a second time. You will again listen carefully.
- Step 5: Go back to your drawing and add any details that you might have missed the first time.

Close your eyes and take a deep breath. Inhale slowly and exhale slowly. Imagine that you are walking through a forest. There are tall, green trees shading the glaring sunshine around you like an umbrella. They reach far into the blue sky. Beneath your feet there are round pebbles and brown dirt making a crunching sound as you walk over them. The air is cool and you can hear the stirring of the leaves in the wind. You hear bugs buzzing and birds chirping around you. There are no other humans around. You are alone with nature. As you walk through the lush, green forest, you are greeted by animals. The first animal you meet is a tiny brown squirrel with shiny black eyes. He looks like he is smiling at you. You smile back. The little squirrel runs up a tree and disappears. You continue walking along the forest path with the sounds of the dirt under you and the birds chirping around you. You spot something moving in the bushes, and out hops 2 furry brown bunny rabbits! You are so happy to see the bunnies with their fluffy white tails. You stop and wait for the bunnies to cross from one side of the path to the other, and disappear into the ferns. Suddenly, you hear the sound of a roar. A cheetah? You think immediately. But you know there are no cheetahs in BC forests. Your imagination is getting the best of you. Could it be a cougar? It could be. You are afraid now. You start to sweat. Your throat feels as if there’s a rock inside it. You want to run but you are afraid to move. ROAR! You hear it again. This time you are not taking any chances. You start to run. You run as fast as your legs can carry you, breathing heavily, with a knot in your stomach and in your throat. You see a light at the end of the path. You run toward the light and when you finally reach the end, you remember. You remember that you are in the tiny forest behind your school. And the roar was the sound of a motorcycle going by. You are relieved to be safe, but sad to leave your little animal friends behind in the forest.
**CHALLENGE #3**

- Step 1: Look at the image on the next slide. Make sure you are looking with your eyes, ears, mouth, hands, and noses!
- Step 2: Write a descriptive paragraph about the image. Describe what you see in the picture using descriptive language (such as adjectives such as colour, shape, size, smell, feel, taste, etc.)
- Step 3: Go back and add more description wherever you feel it is necessary
YOU HAVE SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED THE MISSION!

YOU ARE OFFICIALLY DESCRIPTIVE WRITERS!
THANKS FOR PLAYING