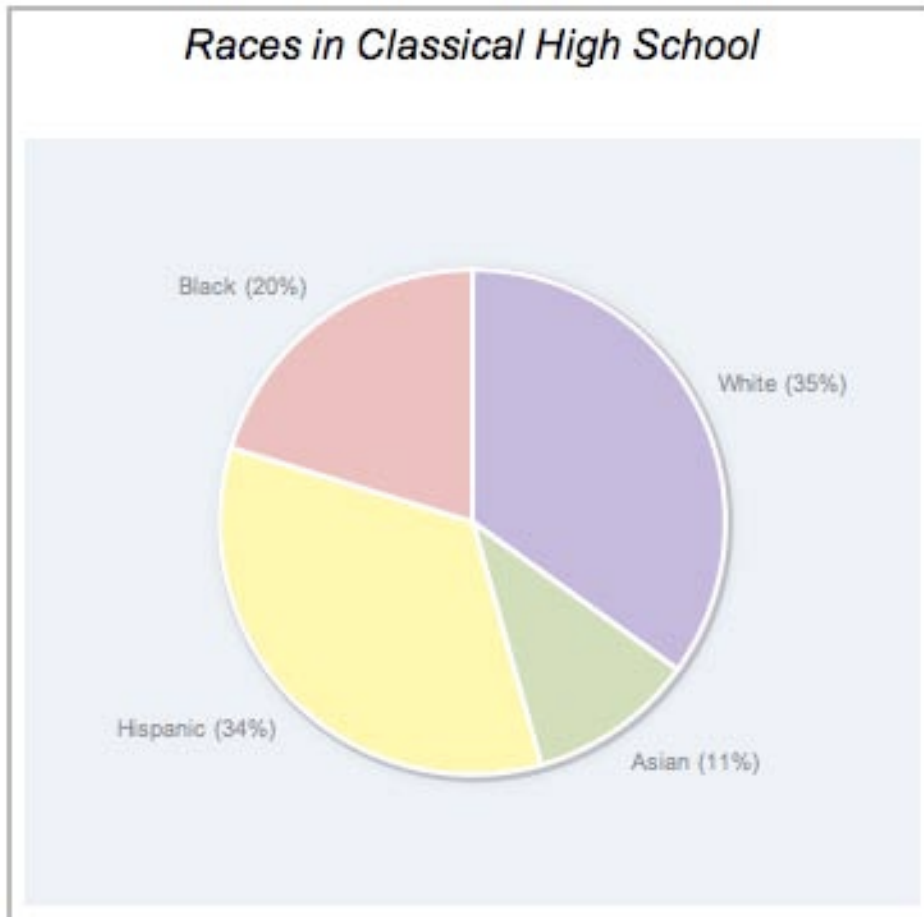# Contextual Factors

CHS is located in an odd part of the city; the neighborhood is a mixture of the impoverished and the artistic, bohemian. CHS sits adjacent to two other high schools in the city. The community of CHS is not as directly linked to the school as with most schools. The reason for this is that the attendance of CHS is not derived from location, but ability. Rather than going to a school in their own "district" of the city, students who want to go to CHS must test in and then commute; the test is basically comprised of reading and reasoning questions, as well as some pre-algrebra. The community, therefore, is not necessarily comprised of students who attend CHS. The school has its own "Community Association," composed of teachers, parents, administrators, and students; this association helps to raise money for the school, and executes extra-curricular activities for the students. From what I can tell, the actual geographic community does not play a huge role in the existence of CHS.

As with any city, there is a large disparity between the affluent and poor who live in P, and because the students of CHS test into the school, rather than attend based on their geographic location in P, there is a large disparity in the socio-economic statuses of the students in attendance. Along with being diverse in socio-economic status, CHS is probably the most racially diverse school in P. The following chart illustrates the racial break down of CHS in 2006 by the school department website.

Races in Classical High School

Black (20%)

White (35%)

Hispanic (34%)

Asian (11%)

By having students test into CHS, it allows the school to put forth a rigorous

curriculum and high standards, which the students must meet. They must comply

with the school's academic requirements in order to graduate. They must take four

years of English and Math; three years of history, laboratory science, and a foreign

language; and one half year of both fine arts and computer literacy. Their schedule

does not rotate, so they have every class each day. This allows students to maintain

a close relation to their studies; however, it also awards some classes wonderful

time slots for learning, and others more detrimental ones. For instance, first period

is always first period and last period is always last period. Each of these periods are

ones in which students are not thrilled to be there, whether it is because they wish

they were still in bed, or they are watching the clock, impatiently awaiting the ringing of the bell signifying that they may leave for the day, and this causes there to be limitations on how much a teacher can accomplish with his students during these periods.

I have made my home in Room 244, on the second floor of CHS.   This is a large classroom; it is big enough to house about students' desks, as well as two teachers' desks. This allows students to feel comfortable, not crowded in their classroom; it also permits us to do more physical and different kinds of activities during class. There are large window, looking out into a courtyard, which sit directly across from the main entrance into the room. The windows, however, are foggy with dirt, making it impossible to see out of most of them. Several bookcases sit under the windows; they are home to copies of grammar and literature textbooks. The wall opposite the teachers' desks is only a faux wall; its purpose is to separate room 244 with an adjoining classroom. This faux wall makes it so that students and teachers can barely hear each other, at times, due to the noise levels coming into the room from the adjoining one. Those students whose desks are directly in front of the "wall" have the hardest time hearing, and because of this, often become distracted or disgruntled, and then forfeit their attempts at participating. The technological aspects of the classroom leave more to be desired; there is an old PC next to my CT's desk. I have access to a projector (if I talk to the AV director), which I can hook up to my computer and project on the screen that can be pulled down over the blackboard behind my CT's desk. There is also a Smartboard in the faculty lounge, but it is missing a cord at the moment. I feel that

because of the lack of technology, the kids are truly suffering. In today's world, kids are the most adept at technology, and their lives are so centered around it, that if we do not use it in our teaching, they could easily lose interest. It is for the benefit of the students that we should use technology in our teaching, and being that there is hardly any available, it may be detrimental to their learning in this environment.

One would think that in a school so racially diverse it would be easy to identify the cliques; however, the social groups there are more racially intermingled. It seems that being exposed to peers of many different races and cultures has allowed students to be open minded and diverse in their friend selection. I have seen many students of different ethnicities associating as friends. There are still cliques; however, they mostly seem to be separated by socio-economic status. The most affluent students associate mostly with themselves. This is the most obvious social group, which has even been brought to my attention by my own students. This affects student learning in multiple ways: Students who do come from more affluent families are already privileged and more likely to have educated parents who spend time focusing on their child's education with him or her. Having some students obviously at an advantage showcases itself at school, intimidating other students, and causing them to shy away from participating as much. Lastly, students from less affluent families may have to work to help support their household, causing them to have less time to focus on their studies.

In one lesson, I focus on the concept of race and socio-economic status; the purpose of this lesson was to introduce Marxist theory. I brought in statistics illustrating the socioeconomic statuses of those living in Providence, as well as video

clips of people of different races depicted in different socioeconomic statuses. As most of the students in my class are from different races and seemingly social backgrounds, this is important to them. This is particularly important to my student, A. When speaking about these issues, she gets very passionate and has a lot to say. When we first began discussing the topic, she told me that because I am white, that makes me middle class. After this comment, I specifically made a journal prompt asking about "middle class" in order to discuss this issue that was clearly controversial and important to A, as well as many other students in class. For RB, I generally stand close by because I know that he quickly goes off task, and begins talking to his neighbors, distracting them. He needs constant attention and allowance to speak aloud. I often call on him to speak so that he has that opportunity, and does not have to converse with his neighbors.

My fourth period is a college preparatory, senior, English class. Most of the students in this class are seventeen or eighteen. The class is basically divided in half between Hispanic and African American students; there are two Caucasian and two Asian students as well. There are fourteen boys and twelve girls in the class, making it almost equal. The majority of the boys in the class are athletes on the football team; they sit on the right side of the room. The Hispanic students can speak Spanish, although they do not do it often in class. Race is an important issue to these students; we have discussed it in class, and they are very passionate about their feelings concerning the topic. They do not discriminate against each other, and are all friendly. I feel this class would benefit from looking at texts that can teach them more about their races, and how different races and peoples have and can be

discriminated against. We have read *Night*, which demonstrated discrimination based not on race, but religion. This was helpful for my students to see because they were able to understand that discrimination does not have to be about the color of one's skin, but it is in the eyes of the discriminator, and mostly always stems from some skewed mindset of the discriminators. I think, however, it would be beneficial for them to also read other books, such as *Things Fall Apart* or *Annie John* in which they can relate to more people of racial backgrounds in the literature.

Surprisingly, some of my best and most insightful students are the football players. They have a lot of prior knowledge on the topics we have so far addressed, and they make meaningful and thought-provoking comments during class and in their writing. The other students have a general base of knowledge, but at times are slightly lacking in areas they should be more proficient in as seniors, such as reading, writing, and vocabulary. These students are incredibly creative, and their out-of-school experiences help them see the world differently, allowing them a new perspective for the material in the classroom. For instance, when discussing *Night* some of my students were able to relate well to the discrimination aspects of the memoire. Other students were very interested to learn the origin of the word "ghetto," which they so loosely use in their slang.

Besides being athletic, my students are funny and have many interesting contributions to make to class. Z and D are both great song writers, which would be useful if teaching poetry. R has a baby and lives on her own, working full time; it amazes me that she is able to do that and still come to school each day, while maintaining good grades. L was recently suspended for reasons concerning with

illegal drugs. L has an IEP; she is allowed extra time for her tests and quizzes, as well as being allowed to type anything she chooses. RB, A, G, and a few others who are part of the football team circle like to have private conversations during transitions in class; a couple of the girls do the same. This is detrimental to student learning as well as class instruction. These conversations can be a slippery slope; they lead to other students talking, and soon the entire class can erupt in side conversations, and turn into chaos that is hard to regain control of. This takes time away from the already short class periods we are given. This also bothers other students who desire to learn, but cannot do so for the entirety of the class period because others choose to be disruptive with their side conversations; they students are visibly upset by this.

Being aware and knowledgeable of the community, school, classroom, and students, and the implications these having on learning is vital. Knowing where our students live, what their neighborhoods are like, and how their lives are outside of school helps us teachers to know how to relate the material to their own lives. If we can find ways of reaching them, and connecting the material for them, they will be more apt to understand and want to learn in class. I have connected the material for them, like I said, when we talked about the origin of the word "ghetto." During the unit on *Night*, I used 9/11 and McDonalds as markers when discussing how many people were killed during the Holocaust. We were also able to discuss the connection between *Animal Farm* and our own government. The classroom setting plays an important role in students' learning; if the room is dirty with no signs of human life anywhere but in their seats, the students will be less likely to care.

Knowing the classroom allows teachers to make applicable changes. Most importantly, being aware of students' interests and personalities, as well as disabilities enables us to modify and construct our lessons in ways that promote all student learning, as well as makes the lessons fun for our students.

Part I: Learning Goals
Learning Goals:

- Students will understand their ability and right to question the government and the choices that are being made, which concern them.
- Students will recognize the allegory in *Animal Farm*, and compare and contrast it with their own society.
- Students will evaluate and possibly reconstruct their own concepts of equality and humanity.

Part II: Unit Objectives

Objectives	Standards	Level
Objective 1: SWBAT analyze *Animal Farm*, and compare the events to those in their own society.	**State:** R-12-4.3: Generating questions before, during, and after reading to enhance/expand understand and/or gain new information. **National:** 3: Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts.	Analysis and Evaluation
Objective 2: SWBAT utilize Marxist theory and develop a reading of *Animal Farm* using the Marxist lens.	**State:** R-12-17.2: Participating in in-depth discussions about text, ideas, and student writing. **National:** 12: Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes.	Application and Synthesis
Objective 3: SWBAT utilize Marxist theory and apply it to *V for Vendetta*.	**State:** R-12-5.5: Explaining how the author's purpose, message, or theme is supported within the text. **National:** 5: Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.	Application and Evaluation

Part III: Rationale / Purpose

George Orwell's, *Animal Farm*, although written in the 1940s, has numerous comparisons to today's society; it offers a message about government, power, rules, choice, and questions. As seniors in high school, my students need to be preparing themselves for the world outside of their parents' homes and the safe walls of their school. By analyzing *Animal Farm* through a Marxist lens, students will discuss issues they will need to be aware of in the real world. They will have the opportunity to discuss their rights as citizens, and what their government should do for them. This will prepare them to be active citizens in their country, and it will teach them about their own agency. The animals on the farm depict those who did not use their own agency, and by evaluating the events in the novel, my students will be able to see how the animals could have used their agency and hypothesize as to why they did not; this will enable my students to use their own agency for the things they desire and deserve.

I think that learning the Marxist theory is especially important to my students because many of them come from impoverished backgrounds. Marxist theory pays special attention to people from the lower

socioeconomic statuses. My students will learn about the equality they deserve; they will also be made aware of the abundance of people in the same situation as themselves, and how they can work to better themselves. Recognizing that there are ways of escaping their status is vital to demonstrate to these students; they need to know that there is more out there and they can be privy to it, that it is not hopeless. *Animal Farm* is a good demonstration of both working toward moving up, and sitting complacent in their situations. By looking at this, students can identify where the animals went wrong, and what they could have done to change their outcome; this will be good practice for my students in terms of doing so for themselves in their present and future lives. While learning about Marxist theory, however, it is important to mention to students that there are choices, and they have the choice to be in whatever station of life they choose; striving for better may not be everyone's ideal life, and it is important that this be explained to students.

Unit Objectives	Assessments	Justification for Assessment Methods	Adaptations
1. Students will be able to analyze *Animal Farm*, and compare the events to those in their own society.	☐ <u>Pre-Assessment</u> Societal beliefs statement activity. ☐ <u>Formative Assessment</u> Personal communication • Class Discussion • Group Work • Informal Questioning ☐ <u>Post-Assessment</u> Students will complete a project, which will require them to design a school setting similar to the animals' in *Animal Farm*.	☐ *The Statement Activity* has been chosen as a pre-assessment because it is mainly presented in an easy "True/False" format, which does not require too much initial work from students. This format also allows me to analyze and categorize their prior knowledge and beliefs easily. By understanding their beliefs pertaining to our government and how/why certain aspects are conducted the way they are, I am able to determine which ways to approach Marxist theory with my students. ☐ Formative Assessment consists of ongoing steps to insure that students are gaining knowledge. These are: *Class discussion* allows me to clarify and provide new information to the students, as well as the students to learn from each other's insights. *Group work* allows students to work collaboratively, sharing ideas and insight. This allows students to help and teach each other. *Informal questioning* allows for understanding and clarity. ☐ Post Assessment consists of students creating a new High School, without adults. Students will have to make decision regarding all aspect of the high school society,	Heterogeneous group work, class discussion. Student L is given extended time to complete writing and assignments. Students will be provided with detailed, typed directions and rubrics for all summative assessments. Students will have the opportunity to move their seats when unable to see the board or projector. Students will be provided with numerous options to demonstrate competence: talking, writing, drawing, designing. Students are provided with my email address to ask questions when not in class. Students are able to meet with me before or after school for extra help.

Unit Objectives	Assessments	Justification for Assessment Methods	Adaptations
		including learning. By completing this project, students are essentially mirroring what took place in *Animal Farm*, and adapting and applying it to their own lives. Students will be able to acknowledge the difficulties of creating a new society.	
Unit Objectives	Assessments	Justification for Assessment Methods	Adaptations
2. Students will be able to utilize Marxist theory and develop a reading of *Animal Farm* using the Marxist lens.	☐ Pre-Assessment Societal beliefs statement activity. ☐ Formative Assessment • Class Discussion • Group Work • Informal Questioning • Class Presentations ☐ Post-Assessment Two-page paper applying a Marxist theory to *Animal Farm.*	☐ *The Statement Activity* has been chosen as a pre-assessment because it is mainly presented in an easy "True/False" format, which does not require too much initial work from students. This format also allows me to analyze and categorize their prior knowledge and beliefs easily. By understanding their beliefs pertaining to our government and how/why certain aspects are conducted the way they are, I am able to determine which ways to approach Marxist theory with my students. ☐ Formative Assessment consists of ongoing steps to insure that students are gaining knowledge. These are: *Class discussion* allows me to clarify and provide new information to the students, as well as the students to learn from each other's insights. *Group work* allows students to work collaboratively, sharing	Heterogeneous group work, class discussion. Student L is given extended time to complete writing and assignments. Students will be provided with detailed, typed directions and rubrics for all summative assessments. Students will have the opportunity to move their seats when unable to see the board or projector. Students will be provided with numerous options to demonstrate competence: talking, writing, drawing, designing.

Unit Objectives	Assessments	Justification for Assessment Methods	Adaptations
		ideas and insight. This allows students to help and teach each other. *Informal questioning* allows for understanding and clarity. *Class presentations* allow me to assess what the students have learned about Marxist theory and how they are able to apply it to *Animal Farm* before they are required to write their paper doing so. ☐ Post Assessment consists of students writing a two-page paper applying a Marxist theory to *Animal Farm*. Completing this allows students to develop and organize their ideas, while practicing and honing their writing skills.	Students are provided with my email address to ask questions when not in class. Students are able to meet with me before or after school for extra help.
Unit Objectives	Assessments	Justification for Assessment Methods	Adaptations
3. Students will be able to utilize Marxist theory and apply it to *V for Vendetta*.	☐ Pre-Assessment Societal beliefs statement activity. ☐ Formative Assessment • Class Discussion • Group Work • Informal Questioning • Character Graphic Organizer	☐ *The Statement Activity* has been chosen as a pre-assessment because it is mainly presented in an easy "True/False" format, which does not require too much initial work from students. This format also allows me to analyze and categorize their prior knowledge and beliefs easily. By understanding their beliefs pertaining to our government and how/why certain aspects are conducted the way they are, I am able to determine which ways to approach Marxist theory with my students. ☐ Formative Assessment consists of ongoing steps to	Heterogeneous group work, class discussion. Student L is given extended time to complete writing and assignments. Students will be provided with detailed, typed directions and rubrics for all summative assessments. Students will have the opportunity to move their seats

Unit Objectives	Assessments	Justification for Assessment Methods	Adaptations
	☐ Post-Assessment Class Debate	insure that students are gaining knowledge. These are: *Class discussion* allows me to clarify and provide new information to the students, as well as the students to learn from each other's insights. *Group work* allows students to work collaboratively, sharing ideas and insight. This allows students to help and teach each other. *Informal questioning* allows for understanding and clarity. The *Character graphic organizer* allows students to organize what they are watching in *V for Vendetta*. This will allow them to easily refer back to this sheet for information when analyzing the movie. It will also require them to pay more attention while watching the movie. ☐ Post Assessment allows students to implement their application of Marxist theory to *V for Vendetta* in an active role. By defending their and opposing others' ideas, they will be practicing their articulation, as well as their improvisational skills.	when unable to see the board or projector. Students will be provided with numerous options to demonstrate competence: talking, writing, drawing, designing. Students are provided with my email address to ask questions when not in class. Students are able to meet with me before or after school for extra help. Students will be provided with a graphic organizer to relate the characters from *V for Vendetta* to the Marxist theories discussed in class.

Pre-Assessment
Directions: Answer the following questions to the best of your ability. For True or False questions, explain your answer.

1) A democracy is _____

_____

_____

2) A dictatorship is _____

_____

_____

3) True or False: In an ideal society, everyone is equal. _____

_____

4) True or False: It is better to be ignorant and happy than to be aware and

upset. _____

_____

5) True or False: The government knows what is best for us. _____

_____

6) True or False: Rules exist to help us live our lives properly. _____

_____

7) True or False: The police should be allowed to do whatever they can to

protect the community. _____

_____

8) True or False: It is okay to upset some people as long as you're doing what is

best for society. _____

_____

Class Debate Structure

Bourgeoisie v. Proletariat

-Bourgeoisie Opening (3 Minutes)
-Proletariat Cross Examination (2 Minutes)

-Proletariat Opening (3 Minutes)
-Bourgeoisie Cross Examination (2 Minutes)

-Bourgeoisie Closing (3 Minutes)
-Proletariat Closing (3 Minutes)

--A different student must speak each time.
--Other students must take notes while the opposing team speaks in order to confer on rebuttals.

During the Opening, you will want to address:

Which characters from *V for Vendetta* represent the Proletariat?

Which characters from *V for Vendetta* represent the Bourgeoisie, or the powers that be?

-What are the ideologies those characters prescribe to, and why?

-Justify those characters' actions?

During the Cross Examination, you will want to break down your opposing team's justifications and reasoning.

During the Closing, you will want to re-address your opposing teams arguments against you, further defending your own arguments.

Judges' Sheet (Proletariat)

Group correctly identified the characters that make up the Proletariat.

Group identified the ideologies the Proletariat in the movie prescribed to.

Group's argument justified their characters' actions.
1 2 3 4 5 (1 Weakest/5 Strongest)

Group's Cross Examination effectively negated or brought into question their opposing team's argument.
1 2 3 4 5 (1 Weakest/5 Strongest)

Group presented a thoughtful, appropriate, and effective Closing Statement.
1 2 3 4 5 (1 Weakest/5 Strongest)

Members of the group were taking notes during others' speeches.

Different group members spoke each time, and everyone seemed to be participating.

Judges' Sheet (Bourgeoisie)

Group correctly identified the characters that make up the Bourgeoisie.

Group identified the ideologies the Bourgeoisie in the movie prescribed to.

Group's argument justified their characters' actions.
1 2 3 4 5 (1 Weakest/5 Strongest)

Group's Cross Examination effectively negated or brought into question their opposing team's argument.
1 2 3 4 5 (1 Weakest/5 Strongest)

Group presented a thoughtful, appropriate, and effective Closing Statement.
1 2 3 4 5 (1 Weakest/5 Strongest)

Members of the group were taking notes during others' speeches.

Different group members spoke each time, and everyone seemed to be participating.

Animal Farm Paper

While reading *Animal Farm*, we have made several connections to Marxist theories and our own society. We have talked about how the classes are the main issue in Marxism, as well as in *Animal Farm*. The activity you will participate in on Friday and Monday will further help your understanding of the relation of Marxist theories to *Animal Farm*.

Write a two-page paper relating one aspect of Marxist theory to *Animal Farm*.

-You should have a clear and coherent thesis statement. Please underline.
-Your paper should have two to three main points of supporting evidence to back up your thesis.
-You should have at least two quotes, properly cited.
-Your paper should be free of intrusive spelling and grammatical errors.

Due: Thursday, April 1

5 Exceeds Standard	4 Meets Standard	3 Nearly Meets Standard	2 Does Not Meet Standard

Rubric for *Animal Farm* **Paper**

- Establishes a clear and insightful stance and develops it fully and effectively (Thesis). -Maintains a logical and clear organization that enhances reader's understanding (supporting paragraphs follow thesis). Three main points for supporting evidence. -Uses perceptive supporting detail, evidence, reasons, and examples (quotes and citations). At least two quotes. -Free from intrusive errors in grammar and conventions. -Proper MLA is used and is free from error.	-Establishes a clear stance and develops it fully. -Maintains clear organization throughout that is appropriate to purpose. Two or three main points for supporting evidence. -Uses appropriate and supporting detail, evidence, reasons, and examples (quotes and citations). May have two quotes. -Contains few errors in grammar and conventions. -Proper MLA is used.	-Establishes a stance or position and provides partial development. -Shows some sense of organization but may be somewhat confused or illogical. Two main points for supporting evidence. -Provides supporting detail and examples, but may include some incomplete or irrelevant information (lacking evidence). Less than two quotes. -May contain intrusive errors in grammar and conventions. -Nearly proper MLA is used, though there may be a few errors.	-Presents an unclear, unfoc or changing stance or posi and provides inadequat development. -Shows little sense of organization. One or two p for supporting evidence -Provides some appropria information or evidence, may be barely developed contradictory. One or ze quotes. -May contain serious erro grammar and convention MLA is drastically incorre

Design Your Own High School Project

How many times have you wished there were no teachers and administration at Classical High School so you and your friends could be free of oppression? Well here's your chance to imagine

this new school community. Your challenge is to create a new Classical High School run by the students! This is still a school, however; there will be a few parameters that you must work with.
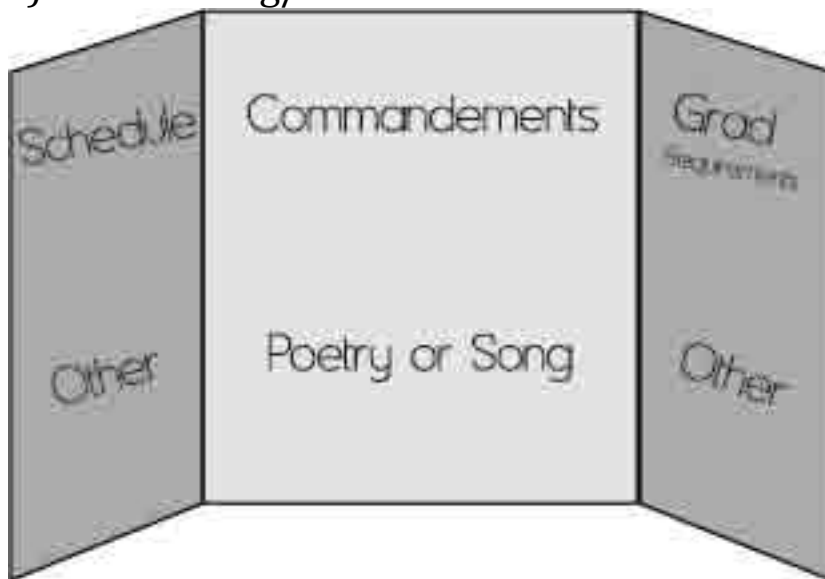
1) Students must still go to classes, which will be on television; final tests will be taken on computers.
2) Assume that students come to school from 9-3 for 180 days.
***There will be no staff of adults at all.
--No kitchen staff
--No custodians
--No administration
--No teachers
--No coaches

Project Requirements:

1) Write 5-10 commandments.
2) Write a daily schedule; how will the school basically run?
3) Write graduation requirements.
4) Write a song/school anthem.

Explain the Following:

1) What happens to those who break the rules?
2) Do different infractions have different consequences?
3) Who, if anyone, will be in charge?
4) What will you do, if anything, about food? Be specific.
5) What will you do, if anything, about sports and other extracurricular activities? Be specific.
6) Would you change the way the school building is used right now?
7) What would you do about social events like banquets, dances, proms, or graduation?
8) Will attendance matter? Will lateness matter?
9) Will there be bells?
10) Will you change the name of the school?
11) What kinds of classes/electives will be offered?
12) Explain any kind of anticipated hierarchy.

Due: April 8; Presentations April 8+9

School Creation Check-List

____ **Project is neat, organized, creative, and typed**

____ **Each group member participates in presenting project**

____ **There are no adults**

____ **5-10 Commandments**

____ **Viable daily schedule is provided**

____ **There are graduation requirements**

____ **A school song is written**

*The following are addressed

_____ **What happens to those who break the rules?**

_____ **Do different infractions have different consequences?**

_____ **Who, if anyone, will be in charge?**

_____ **What will you do, if anything, about sports and other extracurricular activities? Be Specific.**

_____ **Would you change the way the school building is used right now?**

_____ **What would you do about social events like banquets, dances, proms, or graduation?**

_____ **Will attendance matter? Will lateness matter?**

_____ **Will there be bells?**

_____ **Will you change the name of the school?**

_____ **What kinds of classes/electives will be offered?**

_____ **Explain any kind of anticipated hierarchy.**

√- = 3 points √ = 4 points √+ = 5 points

Assessment Narrative

Prior to beginning my unit on Marxism and *Animal Farm*, I asked my students to complete an activity that would assess their current knowledge and beliefs on issues important in my future unit. The Societal Beliefs activity was almost entirely comprised in a True/False format, making it easier for my students to complete, as well as for me to analyze and categorize their existing knowledge, thoughts, and beliefs. After compiling the data, I learned that more than half the class already believed in some of the beginnings of Marxist theory; I only needed to name it for them, and find ways of

connecting it to real-life situations, as well as their own lives, in order for them to gain a better understanding.

Once the unit has begun, I will use a variety of formative as well as multiple summative assessments to meet my unit objectives. As we read *Animal Farm*, we will discuss and assess how the book relates and compares to our society, both on a local or larger governmental scale. By asking students questions such as, "who do you believe has the most power in our society," I can relate the control of the pigs in the book to their own lives. As we discuss such issues, I can assess their understanding of the concepts and their ability to analyze on a deeper level.

Group work will play a pivotal role in my formative assessments for most of my objectives, but particularly the second. Students will work in groups to apply different Marxist theories to *Animal Farm*; they will bullet their points on a posterboard, and then present them to the class. Each student will be required to speak, which will allow me to assess each one's understanding of the concept. I will also be able to assess them by observing their interactions with each other in their groups. I will be able to see those who talk, those who listen, and those who do not participate. Although they will not be formally graded for their groupwork and participation, I will be giving those students who participate in their group and seem engaged a check, equally five points, for the day.

Worksheets such as the graphic organizer I will have students complete while watching *V for Vendetta* allow me to ensure they are paying attention. They also serve a dual purpose in assisting students to organize the information being provided to them, particularly because this information will be pivotal in one of their summative assessments. The class debate will demonstrate their completion of my third objective.

They will demonstrate their ability to utilize Marxist theory through their application of it in defending and arguing against one of the two positions (Bourgeoisie/Proletariat) illustrated in *V for Vendetta*. I will assess them on their ability to acknowledge the existence of their side and the justifications for it, as well as expected opposition to their contrasting side.

I am requiring my students to write a two-page paper relating a Marxist concept to *Animal Farm* as the summative assessment for my second unit objective. My students were required to write a paper just several weeks before during our unit on *Night*, which is why the length of the paper is quite short. I will assess this according to the rubric I will provide them when I give them the assignment, which will be typed out for them. The rubric is clear and straightforward, and almost identical to the one I used when grading their last paper, which helps them to understand what I am looking for and allows them to have prior knowledge in fulfilling my writing requirements.

My last summative assessment aligns with my first unit objective. I believe it will be the most fun for my students, and will allow them to incorporate their own creativity and interests with the material and subject matter they have learned about and studied during this unit. This project allows me to see how my students are able to apply what we have learned and discussed in class to a real-life situation. Evaluating these projects will not only allow me to ensure they have learned the material, but also that they have honed and implemented their skills in analysis and synthesis. By following the check-list for this project, I will be able to easily assess the completion of each part. Assigning groups for this project differentiates the different levels of learners I have in my class.

Each student will be required to speak during the presentation, and this will allow me to

see the level of his or her knowledge and participation in the creation of the project.

Instructional Decision Making

Being a teacher, an authority figure responsible for the education of many students, I must make many decisions; the decisions we make as educators affect the lives of our students, our colleagues, our administrators, and ourselves. A good decision benefits everyone, though it may go unnoticed; but a bad decision has the ability to change the dynamic of a classroom with catastrophic consequences. Lesson plans are not foolproof, and they depend greatly on student cooperation and reaction. There are times when a seemingly perfect lesson plan can go all wrong due to students' reactions and moods. These are the times when we as educators need to make important decisions. We need to, sometimes quickly, modify a lesson to accommodate students' needs and learning styles. This may involve us adapting a particular lesson, or one to follow in the current unit.

This first occurred during my unit on Marxism and *Animal Farm*. As we were discussing socioeconomic status, my students started to make comments such as, "You're white- you're middle class." This comment struck me harshly, not only because I found it to be offensive, but also because I did not want my students, who are mainly comprised of ethnic minorities, to fall into the common misconstrued ideology believing that white people are equated with middle or upper class. The statement caught me off-guard; but it was not the only shocking statement I encountered during that particular discussion. Another student told me, quite matter-of-factly, that all the poor people in Providence are African Americans. After asking this student where she learned this statistic, I was responded to by what seemed like hundreds of voices, mostly shouting that it was true, and that all African

Americans live on the south side of Providence, rather than the more affluently regarded east side.

I did my best to mediate the situation, without forcing any of my beliefs on my students; I knew right away that this was a sensitive topic for my class, and I needed more time to make a decision as to what to do. I had planned for us to move on to analyzing *Animal Farm* and beginning to apply Marxist theories to it; however, after much thought about that day's class, I decided we needed to do more work regarding socioeconomic status and race. I knew that I needed to be very careful approaching this topic with my students; I did not want them to think I was telling them they were wrong, or offending their beliefs, some of which may have come from their parents, making them even more confident and attached to those beliefs. I made a quick decision to have the class write exit tickets stating what they believe to be "middle class."

Their exit tickets mainly said that middle class is when you are not rich, but you are very comfortable, can afford nice things, and do not have to struggle to pay bills; some of them said that white people are mainly middle class. After looking at their exit tickets, I decided that I would bring in different video clips depicting race and socioeconomic status differently, but particularly showing ones that portrayed Caucasian people as lower class. I also brought in statistics for the city of Providence, showing them that it was not only the African Americans who were impoverished, and there were many who were not. I had students sit in a circle and we discussed the different between socioeconomic status and race. My students began to see that one's socioeconomic status is not inextricably correlated to one's

race. We talked about how there are very affluent African Americans, Hispanics, and Asians living in our city; some students brought up examples of people they know. We talked about families depicted in different television shows, such as *My Name is Earl*, in which everyone is white, yet very poor. By watching the videos and partaking in our discussion, they began to realize that the two were not dependent on each other. This allowed us to start over with the discussion on socioeconomic status in relation to Marxism.

I feel that this was pivotal in accomplishing my learning goals and objectives. In order for students to understand Marxist theory and apply it to *Animal Farm*, it was essential that they understand socioeconomic status and equality. It was an added bonus that they were so easily able to relate the ideals and concepts to their own lives and society. The students who had once shouted their strong beliefs that all African Americans were oppressed and poor, began to see that many people of all races are poor, and that for Marxists, these people are one and the same, and they all deserve equality. After spending two class periods on this, students were ready to apply these theories to the chapters of *Animal Farm* as we were reading it.

Aside from noticing the need for revisions in my plan based on a group of students' needs, I have also made the decision to change the plan for an individual student based on his needs. Jimmy, one of my students, has an extremely bad home-life. Throughout the semester he and I have discussed some of the issues he experiences. I cannot help but feel badly for him, and desire to do something to alleviate his problems. When I assigned the paper relating a Marxist ideal to *Animal Farm*, I told my students that it would be due on a particular day, and that I

absolutely would not under any circumstances accept any late papers; I did this because when I had previously assigned a paper, I had many students handing it in late, or emailing it to me late, and begging for extensions and such. It was too much for me to handle, and I felt they were slightly taking advantage of my generosity. I justified it to my students in saying that they had one week to write a two-page paper, the content of which we had thoroughly discussed in class, making it easy for them to write.

Jimmy came to me during homeroom the morning the paper was due and explained to me that his father had come home inebriated the night before and was acting wildly toward his mother and him. He told me that he had the paper almost entirely written, and just needed to edit it, but that he had to leave his home the night before, and did not have the paper with him. Although I had informed my students there would be no exceptions to the deadline, I awarded Jimmy the permission to Email me his paper by the following day. He was extremely grateful, and did get me the paper by the following day like I asked. He also received an A- on it, which was one of the higher grades in the class.

By allowing Jimmy to have the extension on his paper, I allowed him to meet my second unit objective, and get the credit he did deserve for doing so. I feel that sometimes during life situations occur that are out of our control, and we should not always be faulted for those situations. In this case, I believe that Jimmy could not control the situation he was presented with, and did not need to be punished with a zero in my gradebook for it. He proved that I made that right decision by not letting me down or going back on his word to have the paper in on the following day.

I have learned that the act of decision-making plays an extremely pivotal role in teaching. We cannot always count on sticking to our original plans, regardless of how wonderful they seem to us. It is common to change things around to accommodate students' needs and requests. We, as educators, need to think of our students first, sometimes to the detriment of our convenience, plans, and schedules.