Sequencing Rationale

In 9th grade English, there is very little guidance as to which book to read first, or which papers to write when. In general, the teachers know that we need to have the students write four kinds of pieces, and read four different pieces of literature over the year. For this project I chose to have the kids read *A Child Called It* by David Pelzer, *Speak* by Laurie Halse Anderson, *Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare, and a new book that I actually haven’t read yet, *She Said Yes* by Misty Bernall. The last book is a book about the Columbine Massacre. All of these books are very visual, and they all focus on an aspect or theme that the kids can relate to. I also like the fact that all of these books lend themselves to each of our four types of writing that we have to have the kids write.

A Child Called It by David Pelzer is first in the year because it will be a way to ease the students into high school. It is a lower level read, so coming from middle school, the students will hopefully not be overwhelmed by big words and long sentences. I hope the lower level words in the book will help lend the students to deeper discussions in class. I really would like the students to start off the year and learn how to discuss a reading as a class. If they are trying to grapple with a confusing text and new expectations in the classroom, they will easily become overwhelmed. I focused on the essential question of, “How do you chose how to treat someone else,” because High School is notorious for bullying and cliques and mean kids. It is important to me that the kids be reminded of the golden rule in the beginning of the year, and hopefully that will cut down on some of the bullying that may happen.

Speak by Laurie Halse Anderson is the second book I will be covering in this curriculum map. As the kids get comfortable freshman year, about Thanksgiving time, they tend to try to start dating. I chose this book to be read at this point in the year because I want to bring up the ideas of dating violence and taking responsibility for their actions. The kids will go on Thanksgiving Break and Winter Break around the time this book is being read. I want them to be able to think about what could happen if they make poor decisions, and I want them to think about how they will accept the decisions they will be making.

After Winter break the students will be reading Romeo and Juliet. They typically come back from break recharged and ready for a challenge. Shakespeare is difficult for these students to read as it is written in a different language than they are used to. At this point in the year, the students will understand my expectations as far as class discussion and participation. So, to introduce a challenging text is perfect. I also want them to focus on the essential question of, “How do you make decisions” because they will go on Spring Break towards the end of this unit – I want them thinking about the decisions they make.

The last piece of literature I have the kids studying is She Said Yes by Misty Bernall. This book is about one of the girls in the Columbine Massacre who was asked if she believed in God. She said yes, and was killed. While I do not want to focus on religion with this book, I do want to focus on suicide, and coping with the loss of a loved one. Therefore, the essential question for this unit is, “How do you cope?” This is an important question for the kids to be able to answer and for them to learn coping skills towards the end of the year is imperative. When they return to school their sophomore year, they will be bombarded with state testing. Many students will break up with, or be dumped by their “love of their life” over the summer. Most of the teen suicides at our high school have occurred over summer break. Many students feel alone and don’t know how to deal with that. It is important that this be our last unit of study because I want it to be fresh in the kids’ minds over the summer.