



The Rights of Autistic Children
Through the Eyes of Natalie in Al Capone Does My Shirts

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This curriculum unit is recommended for:
Grades 5 and 6 in elementary or middle school

Keywords: *Al Capone Does My Shirts*, Gennifer Choldenko, Natalie Flanagan, Moose Flanagan, Dr. Seuss, *Horton Hears a Who*, *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, *The Convention on the Rights of the Child*, *The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, Autism Spectrum Disorder, children's rights, responsibility, myths about people with disabilities, stereotypes about people with disabilities, IDEA, IEP.

Teaching Standards: See [Appendix 1](#) for teaching standards addressed in this unit.

Synopsis: In this unit, the students analyze Gennifer Choldenko's book *Al Capone Does My Shirts* through 30 reading and writing tasks. This analysis leads them to discover the theme at the heart of the book: Autism Spectrum Disorder. It also leads them to discover three foundational documents in human rights history: *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, *the Convention on the Rights of the Child*, and *the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. Throughout the unit, the students are highly engaged as they read, write, and reflect on the novel and participate in weekly discussions around topics such as responsibility, rights, freedoms, stereotypes, and language about people with disabilities. In writing this curriculum unit, my hope is to contribute to Human Rights education and to help our students become more knowledgeable about Autism Spectrum Disorder, a disability on the rise in the United States, and therefore improve attitudes toward people with Autism.

I plan to teach this unit during the coming year to 24 students in 5th grade English Language Arts.

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“Natalie lives in her own world. (...) Sometimes it’s a good world and sometimes it’s a bad world. And sometimes she can get out and sometimes she can’t.”¹

Introduction

Rationale

What kind of world do we desire for our children and the children of our children? I would hope that we all wish for a society in which people live in harmony, a society based on mutual respect and acceptance, a society in which people care about each other “no matter how small”² and how different we are. If we wish for such a world, then teachers have a responsibility to educate children about human rights and to emphasize these humanistic principles. In the seminar “A Person’s a Person No Matter How Small”: Teaching Human Rights,” I had the opportunity to do just that and to learn more about the rights of my fellow humans.

Surprisingly, the United States, which under the leadership of Eleanor Roosevelt (chosen as chairperson of the United Nations Human Rights Commission in 1946) led the creation of [*the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*](#) (UDHR), has no national plan for Human Rights Education³. Yet, the same Eleanor Roosevelt was adamant in her belief that Human Rights education is a means to secure and maintain peace. Indeed, she wrote with regard to an educational campaign that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) planned to conduct:

“This educational campaign, of course, is very important for at present it looks as though we may be in a race between education that will permit us to consider human beings important and grant them the opportunity of trying to exist without war which most quickly destroys their human rights, and lack of education that destroys these rights and freedoms and engages in war. And we know today that war may easily mean the destruction of our civilization.”⁴

Hence, this unit is an effort to explicitly teach about human rights and freedoms just like stated in the preamble of the [*Universal Declaration of Human Rights*](#): “Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance, and friendship (...)”⁵ This unit also humbly hopes to contribute to Human Rights education, which is increasingly expanding internationally, but rather limited in American schools; and yet so crucial in developing compassionate and caring citizens.

In my 5th grade English Language Arts class, we study the book [*Al Capone Does my Shirts*](#) by Gennifer Choldenko. One of the themes at the core of the novel is autism. The book will inspire our class discussions around topics such as fairness, justice, equality, social responsibility and education, specifically as they relate to people living with disabilities. Since the future lawyers, doctors, judges, nurses, teachers, police officers sit at our desks in our classrooms, let’s make sure that they develop a sense of justice and acceptance from an early age. Let’s make sure they understand that we all have a responsibility, in our communities, to ensure that everyone is welcome, respected and valued. The book will provide pathways by which we can interject our voices into the ongoing conversations about disability rights and

people with autism, while fulfilling obligations related to 5th grade learning standards in reading and writing. Lastly, let's inspire our students by the wise words of Eleanor Roosevelt who said:

“(…) human rights begin in small places, close to home – so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person; the neighborhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerned citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world.”⁶

School/Student Demographics

I teach at [E.E. Waddell Language Academy](#), a K-8 county-wide magnet school in the South Learning Community. We have a population of 1375 with 929 students at the elementary level and 444 in middle school. E.E. Waddell offers five languages: French, German, Japanese, Chinese and Spanish as language immersion in elementary school, and Spanish is added in middle school. Our school is incredibly diverse. The majority of the staff is bilingual and 30% of the teachers and teacher assistants do not have a US citizenship. The student body is very diverse as well: 43% Caucasian, 22% African American, 22% Hispanic, 6% Asian, 6% Multiracial and less than 1% each American Indian and Pacific Islander. The Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSO) is extremely active and supportive. In 2012, Waddell Language Academy was awarded the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language (ACTFL) Melba D. Woodruff Prize for an exemplary Foreign Language Program. This prize recognizes schools that align their curricula with the World Readiness Standards for Language Learning and integrate languages with content areas. In addition, Waddell is consistently recognized by Magnet Schools of America as one of its top merit schools; recognized by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction as a Prepared Global Ready School, and recently received the International Citizen of the Year Award at the Charlotte Chamber of Commerce Economic Growth Recognition Dinner. Internationally, Waddell is a PASCH school, partner school of the German Foreign Ministry and the German Central Agency for Schools Abroad; officially accredited by the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs with the Label FrancEducation; and since the opening of the Confucius Institute at UNC-Charlotte in 2017, again identified as a Confucius Classroom School.

At the elementary level at E.E. Waddell, the students receive their instruction in French, German, Chinese or Japanese. They enter the language program in Kindergarten or first grade. In the French and German program, most students first learn how to read in the target language, and, eventually, transfer their reading skills in English. Following the total immersion model, formal English instruction is only introduced in 3rd grade when students begin to receive one hour of English instruction daily. By the time they reach fifth grade, most of them are bilingual. They can understand, speak, read and write in French or German with varying levels of proficiency.

In 5th grade, for the English Language Arts classes, the students are grouped based on their 4th grade End of Grade test results. In the class that I co-teach with my friend and colleague, Nabil Elhalabi, the twenty-four students (twelve boys and twelve girls) come from our homeroom classes (French immersion) and have achieved a level three or four on the Language Arts End of Grade Test. This class is very diverse socioeconomically and ethnically. It includes ten Caucasians, seven African Americans, two Hispanics, four Multi-Racial and one Asian student. Three students have English as a second language.

Unit Goals

The first goal of this literacy unit is for the 5th graders to discover the wonderful book written by Gennifer Choldenko, [*Al Capone Does My Shirts*](#). Using close reading and written assignments, the students analyze this novel in depth. A multitude of tasks, focusing on the 5th grade North Carolina English Language Arts Standard Course of Study (ELA SCOS), give them an opportunity to make predictions, to express their opinion, to defend an argument, to share a part of their life, to analyze character traits and to research enigmatic and fascinating topics such as Alcatraz and the infamous Al Capone. The unit also leads them to revisit important literary concepts such as “metaphor”, “setting” and “tone”.

With this first goal, I intend to “educate *through* human rights”, which Sandra Sirota, a post-doctoral researcher in Human Rights, defines as: “learning and teaching in a way that respects the rights of both educators and learners.”⁷ Indeed, the analysis of the book is done via writing assignments and discussions leading the learners to listen to their classmates, in order not only to better understand the book, but also to discover and get to know each other and, ultimately, learn to value diverse perspectives. Thus, the objective is for the students to learn to practice right-respecting behaviors in their lives.

The second goal of the unit is to raise awareness about the Autism Spectrum Disorder, a disability that affects 1 in 59 children in the United States⁸, “making it the fastest growing serious development disability in the country”⁹. Several of the written and reading activities invite the students to relate to Natalie, the character in the book who has autism, and to begin to understand the hurdles that children with disabilities encounter in their everyday lives; therefore developing empathy and gaining a greater respect for them.

With this second goal, I intend to “educate *for* human rights”, as a means to increase students’ awareness of what autism is and how it affects people so that they are empowered to enjoy and exercise their rights and to respect and uphold the rights of others.¹⁰

The third goal of the unit is to introduce the students to important documents in the history of humanity, such as [*the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*](#), [*the Convention on the Rights of the Child*](#) and [*the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*](#). The students will discover, just like I did during the seminar, that these texts articulate and list the rights that all human beings deserve, especially the most vulnerable in our societies: Children and disabled people. And even though, in many countries -the United States included- these rights are still violated daily, learning about them, and then maybe one day advocating for them is a worthy cause that begins with educating more young people about their rights and the rights of others.

With this third goal, my intention is to “educate *about* human rights”, which Sandra Sirota defines as “providing knowledge and understanding of human rights norms and principles, the values that underpin them and the mechanisms for their protection.”¹¹

Instructional Implementation

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child

How often do we read picture books to our 5th graders? My inclination would be to say we do not do it often enough. Yet, these books teach kids a myriad of lessons and trigger the imagination through words and illustrations. In an article titled “Children’s Pictures Books and Human Rights”, Nicky Parker says: “When a child is immersed in a story, they are not just gaining knowledge but also empathy. (...) All good picture books build the empathy muscle. With empathy comes caring and respect.”¹²

Hence, I introduce the curriculum unit with the reading of one of Dr. Seuss most famous picture books, *Horton Hears a Who*¹³, (available as an E book in public libraries). Each child reads a page, then, reflects in a journal on this sentence: “A person’s a person no matter how small.”¹⁴, and finally shares his/her response. It is interesting to point out that Theodore Seuss Geisel, aka Dr. Seuss, drew racist anti-Japanese cartoons during World War II for the newspaper PM¹⁵. In 1953, he went to Japan with the mission to study the impact of World War II on Japanese children, and came back with a completely different view of this nation. *Horton Hears a Who* was published in 1954. The theme at the core of the book: “A person’s a person no matter how small” bloomed out of these visits in Japan. Jonathan Crow, author of the article “Dr. Seuss Draws Anti-Japanese Cartoons During World War II Then Atones With *Horton Hears a Who!*”, believes that this book was Dr. Seuss’s way to apologize to the Japanese people for his shameful drawings. The book is dedicated to Mitsugi Nakamura, the dean of Doshisha University at the time¹⁶.

The second activity engages the students firsthand with the theme of the seminar: Human Rights. The students respond to these five questions:

- How would you define the word “child”?
- How would you define the word “rights”?
- How would define the word “responsibility”?
- Do children have rights? If so, list as many as you can.
- Do children have responsibilities? If so, what are they?

We discuss their responses as a whole class, and then, I share with them the following important facts.

The most important document in terms of Human Rights is the [*Universal Declaration of Human Rights*](#) (UDHR)¹⁷. In 1945, at the end of World War II, the United Nations were founded in an effort to bring peace and justice to the world. On December 10 1948, the 192 countries within the United Nations adopted the [*Universal Declaration of Human Rights*](#). These 30 articles articulate and list the rights and freedoms of all human beings¹⁸. They are rooted on the principle that “each person is a moral and rational being who deserves to be treated with dignity.”¹⁹

On November 20 1989, the General Assembly of the United Nations ratified [*the Convention on the Rights of the Child*](#) (CRC)²⁰. This document consisting of 54 articles declares that childhood is entitled to special care and assistance²¹. In this treaty, the term “child” is defined as a: “human being below the age of eighteen years unless the law applicable to the child majority is attained earlier.” (article 1 of the CRC²²). Let’s mention that the United States is the only country that has not ratified this treaty²³. Out of nine international treaties, the United States has only approved three: *The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, *the International Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination* and *the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment*²⁴.

With the last activity in this introduction, the students discover, with a partner, [*the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*](#) (CRC)²⁵ through the reading of a simplified version, [*The Little Book of Children’s Rights and Responsibilities*](#)²⁶ written by the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF). They pick the right that they believe is the most fundamental and present it to the class with an illustration (a drawing or a picture from the Internet) and a written explanation of why they chose it. During the presentations, we discuss the following question: Do children around the world have these rights? Finally, with the students’ artifacts, we make a paper quilt that we display on the bulletin board.

About the Book

[*Al Capone Does My Shirts*](#)²⁷ by Jennifer Choldenko tells the story of the Flanagan’s family who, in 1935, moves from San Francisco to Alcatraz, when the father finds a job as a guardian and an electrician in the federal penitentiary, that houses infamous criminals such as Al Capone, Machine Gun Kelly, Roy Gardner, etc. The story is told from Moose’s perspective, a twelve-year old boy whose sister, Natalie, suffers from Autism Spectrum Disorder. If you happen to have a student with this disorder in your class, I would reconsider reading this book to avoid making him/her feel uncomfortable; however there are numerous other books that could be used that relate to other forms of disabilities or human rights violations, including *El Deafo*, *Wonder*, and *Chains*.

The book, recommended for ten-year-old children and up²⁸, is extremely popular. Jennifer Choldenko has sold more than 2 million copies²⁹ of her series on Alcatraz. I have read [*Al Capone Does My Shirts*](#)³⁰ two years in a row with my English class and, each time, it was a hit. Both years, at the end of the book, the students decided to read the sequel *Al Capone Shines My Shoes*³¹.

The author actually intended the book for boys. In her introduction to [*Al Capone Does My Shirts*](#), she gives us this interesting insight: “Conventional wisdom holds that boys do not like emotional books. They like action, plot, humor, and graphic appeal. Nobody thought adding a character with autism was a good idea.”³² As a teacher, I can attest that both the boys and the girls in my class find the story captivating. The novel has earned many literature awards such as the Newberry Honor Book, the Best Book for Young Adults, the Parent’s Choice Silver Medal, the Special Needs Award and many more³³. Further, it provides a fictional space where male readers may feel more comfortable exploring their emotional reactions than they do in real life due to social constructions of masculinity.

Before the Reading: Prediction

Before diving into this book, in order to hook the students' attention and sense of suspense, I will ask them to make a written prediction only based on the title, the cover and the summary. They will not be allowed to read the author's introduction to the book or the Praise from Parents, Teachers, Librarians and Readers, since these pieces reveal too much about Natalie's autism³⁴. I much prefer having them discover this theme later in the novel. In this activity, they are not allowed either to research Al Capone or Alcatraz, even though these words appear on the cover. They will have a chance to do that during the analysis of the book. At the end of the session, the students share their predictions in a circle.

During the Reading: Analysis of the Book

We will read, as a whole group, one or two chapters of the book per week. In the past, my English class has read *Al Capone Does My Shirts* on Thursdays. Why this particular day? For the simple reason that I can use Friday to extend an activity if needed. This way of working builds suspense and anticipation. The students will beg you to read more. Yes, imagine 5th graders eager to read, don't you love it? Yet, the once a week pacing gives them plenty of time to complete the chapter assignment. Now, in order not to spoil the end (totally surprising), they have to promise not to read ahead. In the past, I have just asked them to stand up and to solemnly promise not to read more than the chapter of the day. Did it work? Not really, each year one student could not stand it and would ruin, not necessarily the end, but the part around Natalie's age which remains a mystery until far into the novel. So this time, we will discuss the reasons why the reading experience will be appreciated by everyone, if we all follow this simple rule: one or two chapters per week. Second, they will sign a written pledge (see [appendix 2](#)), in which they will swear not to read more than one or two chapters per week. Finally, we will decide as a group of a consequence if one individual breaks the rule. Will it work? Maybe.

Most lesson plans around this book on the internet focus on reading comprehension and vocabulary activities. In this curriculum unit, even though I propose reading comprehension assignments, I also offer several writing prompts that center around Natalie's character. Out of the 40 chapters in the novel (that we will all read as a group), I have selected 30 in which Natalie appears, and I have created 30 activities (for a friendly version of these prompts see [appendix 3](#)). Out of these 30 assignments, the students have to choose 15. I strongly believe in motivating kids by giving them choices. Since we read one or two chapters on Thursdays, they have a week to turn in the homework. If the assignment for the chapter read does not inspire them, they may skip it, however at the end of the analysis of the book, 15 activities need to be completed. Can they work on more than 15? Absolutely, any extra assignment will count as extra credit. They will complete these activities in their journal. I have created a table (see [appendix 4](#)) in order for the teacher to keep track of how many activities the students have done.

Many of these prompts are writing pieces. As an English teacher, I realize that I tend to favor reading over writing. The fact that the End of Grade Test revolves exclusively around reading may have something to do with it. Yet, the research shows that students should write about what they read. In a report titled, *Writing to Read Evidence for How Writing can Improve Reading*, Steve Graham and Michael Hebert write: "The evidence is clear: Writing can be a vehicle for improving reading. In particular, having students write about a text that they are reading enhances how well they comprehend it."²⁶ The other reason why it is critical to give our

students many opportunities to write is that writing helps them to become career ready. In the article, *Literacy in Every Classroom. The Writing Journey*, Kelly Gallagher says: “This bears repeating: when students’ writings are limited, doors to opportunity are closed. Students who write well will have a leg up when it comes to finding and keeping a job.”²⁷

The writing and reading prompts are intended to be short. Their answers should be about one or two paragraphs long (consisting of at least 5 sentences each) depending on the task. My hope is for my students to have as much fun writing as they have reading this book. At the beginning of each class, before reading the next chapter, the students will have an opportunity to read their assignment. We will call these sessions “Mic Time”. The reader will get to read his/her piece of writing using a fake microphone that makes an echo and that students love. I will assess each one according to the rubric that you can find under the [appendix 5](#).

Furthermore, since the analysis of the book will be done through various discussions, it is critical to establish a friendly “community of learners”³⁷ in the classroom. In order to reach this objective, I will share with my students the following expectations before starting the chapters’ analysis:

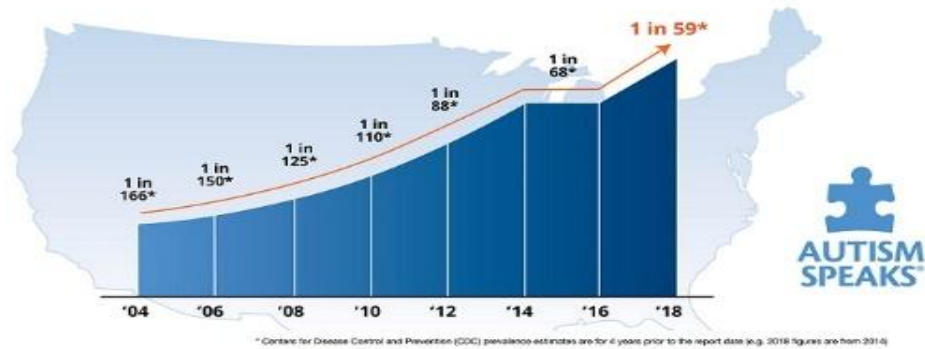
- “Students are expected to make up their own minds. (...)
- Students and teachers are expected as a matter of course to provide reasons or examples in support of their observations, conclusions, and behavior.
- Students and teachers are expected to seriously consider other perspectives on an issue (...).
- All persons are to be treated respectfully by everyone, even if their ideas seem wrong or silly.
- It is not simply permissible but expected that students will disagree with one another; however, differences of opinions must never be directed personally as attacks on the person.”³⁸

Autism Spectrum Disorder: Background for Teachers and Students

I suggest to teach this section only after task # 20, in order to maintain the suspense around Natalie’s condition. I will use a Power Point as a visual to help the students stay focused. I also may invite the school counselor to talk about this topic with the class. Natalie suffers from Autism Spectrum Disorder. Gennifer Choldenko never mentions the word “autism” in this book because the disability was not identified until 1943. In 1935, the time period in which the book takes place, people who were autistic were considered “schizophrenic” or “mentally retarded”. They were often placed in mental institutions. This was the case for Gina, the author’s sister and inspiration for the fictional character of Natalie. Gina ended up spending her life in Camarillo State Hospital.³⁹

The word “autism” comes from the Greek “autos” which means “self”. It is important to note that autism is not a disease but a developmental disability⁴⁰. In her book, *Diseases and Disorders Autism Spectrum Disorder*, Sarah Goldy-Brown defines this dysfunction as: “a brain disorder, or neurological condition, caused by differences in the way the brain is wired.”⁴¹ Today, this disorder is on the rise (see graph below⁴²) in the United States.

Estimated Autism Prevalence 2018



The Center for Disease Control has determined that 1 in 59 children in the United States has Autism Spectrum Disorder⁴³ (ASD), which represents about 1.09 million children⁴⁴. Boys are more susceptible to have the disability. The proportion is 1 in 37 boys versus 1 in 151 girls⁴⁵.

Children with ASD struggle, at different level of intensity, in three sectors: Communication, social interaction and behavior. Natalie who has a severe form of autism is able to communicate. However, her speech is very limited. At the beginning of the novel, she does not use pronouns, does not express herself in complete sentences, and speaks about herself at the third person like on page 23: “Natalie Flanagan’s whole family.”⁴⁶

Socially, Natalie does not make friends easily, at least at the beginning of the book. Sadly, she is terribly alone and lives in her own world. On page 175, her mom compares her with her brother: “I got one child who has everything, (...), big, strapping, healthy, smart ... makes people laugh. Got kids coming over looking for him night and day, just like at home. Little ones, big ones and the girls-they all like Moose. But Natalie, Natalie doesn’t have the whole world looking out for her. She needs me.”⁴⁷ Another of her asocial habits is that she hates to be touched. On page 13, Moose complains about it: “I want to take her hand to make sure she keeps up, but nobody touches Natalie.”⁴⁸ She also has difficulty to express her feelings, which does not mean that she is not sensitive. In chapter 4, Moose explains how his sister cried for two hours straight because he had failed asking her his daily question: “Hey, Natalie, the sun get up okay this morning?”⁴⁹ to which she often never responded. Rituals are important to many people with autism, and if they are broken they often react negatively.

Behaviorally, children with ASD often adopt repetitive behavior. For example, Natalie rocks herself before or after a tantrum or for no apparent reasons. She also plays with buttons and organizes them in neat piles. These behaviors have the effect to soothe her and bring her a sense of comfort and safety, which is typical in children with ASD⁵⁰. Finally, Natalie, like many children with this disability, has special interests and possesses extraordinary talents: She loves books’ indexes and has an amazing math gift. She is able to calculate very complex computation problems in seconds, which helps her gain Moose’s friends’ admiration. On page 18, she says to Piper: “487 times 6,421 is 3,127,027.”⁵¹

Scientists do not know what causes autism. Some believe it is a hereditary disability, others think it is due to environmental factors such as the mother’s health during pregnancy or chemicals in the environment⁵². Even though autism is incurable, it is treatable especially if the

child is diagnosed early. Unfortunately, children who are not treated grow into adults who struggle to take care for themselves, which is Natalie's parents biggest fear, and the reason why they have tried all kinds of programs: "My mom's done a million things to help Natalie. The aluminum treatments, the voodoo dolls, UCLA, the psychiatrists, the bible readings, Mrs. Kelly."⁵³ In the book, Natalie shows huge progress thanks to her therapist, Carrie Kelly. She starts using pronouns, shows better manners during meals, and starts expressing her emotions. On page 157, her mom beams: "Do you know what she said yesterday? She said, "You made me sad"."⁵⁴ Moose starts to confide in his sister, and she even makes a joke on page 205: "Why did the chicken cross the road? (...) His buttons rolled to the other side."⁵⁵ The book has a happy ending: Natalie is accepted at the Esther P. Marinoff School despite her age, thanks to none other than the infamous Al Capone, also known as Scarface!

Task 1: Chapter 1: Devil's Island

Standard: ELA SCOS: RL.5.1 and W.5.5

In this chapter, Moose, the narrator, describes Alcatraz and presents his family.

After the reading of this first chapter, take a few minutes to review with the students the meaning of "setting": The "where" and the "when" a story takes place.

Task #1: The students describe the setting in a paragraph. They find 3 or 5 interesting facts about Alcatraz⁵⁶ and the year 1935⁵⁷, then compare and contrast them with the information given in this chapter. What are the clues in the chapter that the year is 1935?

Task 2: Chapter 2: Errand Boy

Standard: ELA SCOS: RL.5.1

In this chapter, Moose reproaches to his dad to work too much and not to spend time with him. His mom asks him to watch Natalie while she runs an errand to the city. Finally, he meets Theresa Mattaman, a seven-year old, who offers to show him and Natalie the island.

Task #2: On page 12, Moose says: "'Ten," I answer. Natalie's age is always ten. Every year my mom has a party for her and she turns ten again."⁵⁸ The students make a hypothesis to explain Moose's enigmatic words. They use evidence from this chapter and the previous one to justify their answer.

Task 3: Chapter 3: Trick Monkey

Standard: ELA SCOS: W.5.5 and W.5.6

In this chapter, Theresa shows the island to Moose and Natalie. She gives information about Al Capone. Later, they meet Piper, the very bossy warden's daughter.

Task #3: First, the students research information on Al Capone using the educational and kid friendly website Dukster⁵⁹. Then they create a Wanted Poster for the infamous criminal. Before assigning the work to the students, I suggest looking at Wanted Posters of, for example, Bonnie and Clyde, so that they get an idea of what it looked like. In the unit that Diana Nagliari, Samantha Neader, Katelyn McMillan and Clare Byrnes created on the same book, they offer a

template for the poster and specific information around which the kids can structure their work⁶⁰ (see [appendix 6](#)).

Task 4: Chapter 4: Laugh-Nosed Beet

Standard: ELA SCOS: RL.5.3

In this chapter, The Flanagan family is getting ready to take Natalie to the Esther P. Marinoff School, a boarding school that helps children with mental disabilities.

Task #4: The students compare and contrast the two main characters, Natalie and Moose, using a Venn Diagram. They can use details from chapters 1-4 to find evidence for their answer.

Task 5: Chapter 5: Murderers Darn My Socks

Standard: ELA SCOS: W.5.3

In this chapter, Moose realizes that his mom has not packed Natalie's soft purple blanket.

Task #5: The students write about an object they were or are still very attached to.

Task 6: Chapter 7: Big For Seven Grade

Standard: ELA SCOS: W.5.3

In this chapter, Moose tells his experience as a new student at Marina's school.

Task #6: The students write about a time when they were new in a group and tell how it made them feel.

Task 7: Chapter 10: Not Ready

Standard: ELA SCOS: RL.5.1

In this chapter, the Flanagan's family receives a call from Mr. Purdy, the headmaster at the Esther P. Marinoff School where they have taken Natalie the day before: They have to go pick her up immediately.

Task #7: The students make a prediction on the reason why the Flanagans have to go pick up Natalie so soon: 36 hours after her arrival to be exact.

Task 8: Chapter 11: The Best in the Country

Standard: ELA SCOS: RL.5.4

In this chapter, Moose and his mom go pick up Natalie at the Esther P. Marinoff. School. Mr. Purdy explains to the mom that Natalie had a fit and that, therefore, she is not ready for the school. He does recommend a therapist named Carrie Kelly.

Task #8: The students have to find the simile on page 65 ("At home she'd spend hours in her room rocking like a boat in a terrible storm."). They explain whether this figure of speech is judicious in the context. Lastly, they invent another simile or metaphor to describe the situation.

Task 9: Chapter 12: What about the Electric Chair?

Standard: ELA SCOS: RL.5.1

In this chapter, Piper, the warden's daughter, convinces Moose to help her persuade their classmates to get their clothes laundered by Al Capone and other convicts for 5 cents.

Task #9: This assignment is inspired and adapted from the shirt project created by Andrea Kennedy⁶¹. The students pick a character from the book and, on a paper shirt template ([appendix7](#)), design a shirt that represents the character's personality. On the reverse side, they describe three of his/her character traits and explain them by referring to the text. They present their project to the class prior to the weekly reading.

Task 10: Chapter 13: One Woman Commando unit

Standard: ELA SCOS: W.5.3

In this chapter, Moose's mom asks him to take Natalie everywhere he goes.

Task #10: The students tell the story of a time when their parents or teachers asked them to do something they did not want to do.

Task 11: Chapter 15: Looking for Scarface

Standard: ELA SCOS: W.5.3

In this chapter, Moose, Natalie and their friends go to a secret spot where they can watch the convicts walk up to the cell house.

Task #11: The students tell the story of a time when they disobeyed their parents or teachers and did something they were not supposed to do and the consequences of their actions.

Task 12: Chapter 16: Capone Washed Your Shirts

Standard: ELA SCOS: W.5.3

In this chapter, Moose's friends meet Mr. Trixtle, one of the guards, who is intrigued by the fact that they are bringing laundry to school. Piper answers to his many questions by lying.

Task #12: The students tell the story of a time when they lied and they tell what was the consequence.

Task 13: Chapter 19: Daddy's Little Miss

Standard: ELA SCOS: W.5.2

In this chapter, the warden scolds Moose and his friends for the laundry's scheme.

Task #13: On page 109, Moose writes a letter to Pete, his best friend. The students write this letter as if they were Moose.

Task 14: Chapter 20: Warning

Standard: ELA SCOS: RL.5.1

At the beginning of the chapter, Natalie refuses to move because Moose has knocked her button piles by accident. At the end, Moose has a conversation with his dad about the laundry scheme. His father reprimands him severely for having been dishonest, and takes away Moose's baseball equipment as a consequence.

Task#14: The students find the evidence in the chapter that Natalie is part of Moose's group of friends; that they have come to love her.

Task 15: Chapter 21: It Never Rains on Monday

Standard: ELA SCOS: RL.5.4

At the beginning of the chapter the weather is horrible, it rains every day and Moose is bored to death. Then at the end of the chapter, the sun comes back as well as Piper with a new scheme.

Task#15: The students talk about the tone (the narrator's attitude toward his or her subject⁶²) at the beginning and at the end of the chapter. Before assigning this activity, I suggest to review the concept of tone with the students. The website [Ereadingworksheets⁶³](#) offer exercises on this topic.

Task 16: Chapter 23: She's Not Cute

Standard: ELA SCOS: W.5.1

In this chapter, Moose once again befriends Scout, (his friend with whom he argued over the day of the baseball game).

Task #16: The students write about their best friend: Who is your best friend? Tell us about him/her. Why is he/she your best friend?

Task 17: Chapter 24: Like a Regular Sister

Standard: ELA SCOS: RL.5.1

In this chapter, Moose looks for a convict's baseball in the bushes. When he comes back near Natalie, she keeps repeating: "105".

Task #17: The students make a guess about this mysterious number.

Task 18: Chapter 26: Convict Baseball

Standard: ELA SCOS: W.5.3

In this chapter, Moose finds Natalie with a convict, who gives him a baseball.

Task#18: The students ask one question to Moose, one to Natalie and one to Onion, the convict. They answer it as if they were these characters.

Task 19: Chapter 27: Idiot

Standard: ELA SCOS: RL.5.1

In this chapter, Moose is horrified by the fact that Natalie has met alone with a convict probably several times. He takes her home. On his way, he meets with Piper who realizes that Natalie got the baseball from a convict.

Task#19: The students choose a quote in this chapter and elaborate on its importance⁶⁴.

Task 20: Chapter 28: Tall for her Age

Standard: ELA SCOS: RL.5.1

In this chapter, Moose's mom is happy because Natalie is making huge progress. She is using pronouns in her speech and is expressing her feelings.

Task #20: The students make a hypothesis about Natalie's problem. They can gather evidence from any chapter before chapter 28. During the reading lessons, I would advise that the instructor writes, on chart paper, what the students discover about Natalie and Moose. This will be beneficial later on when the tasks will ask the students to make inferences about these characters.

Task 21: Chapter29: Convict Choir Boy

Standard: ELA SCOS: W.5.2

In this chapter, Moose meets Piper. She tries to convince him to arrange a meeting between Natalie and Onion, the convict who befriended her, in order to spy on them and find out what kind of relationship they have.

Task #21: The students write an interview between an imaginary news reporter and a character of their choice. Minimum length: 5 questions, 5 answers. Maximum length: 10 questions, 10 answers. Before the reading session, the students act out the interview if they wish.

Task 22: Chapter 30: Eye

Standard: ELA SCOS: W.5.3

In this chapter, Natalie has a terrible tantrum. She keeps repeating: "OUTSIDE, buttons.105."⁶⁵ Moose soothes her the best he can, and then, eventually, let her go outside. For the first time, she refers to herself with the pronoun "I" written "Eye" in the chapter because Moose, at first, does not understand what she wants: "Eye outside."⁶⁶

Task #22: Moose is the narrator in the book, but in this chapter, the students rewrite it from Natalie's perspective. Since this task is more challenging, I suggest to start the piece of writing with the class as a whole group and to let them finish on their own.

Task 23: Chapter 31: My Dad

Standard: ELA SCOS: RL.5.4

In this chapter, Moose and his dad clean up the house after Natalie's tantrum. Then, they have a very important conversation. Moose asks his dad whether he was the reason why Natalie got worse at his birth. His father responds: "Absolutely...absolutely for sure it had nothing, nothing at all to do with you."⁶⁷ On her website, Gennifer Choldenko confides how her parents held her somewhat responsible for her sister's problems. She says: "Unfortunately, because so little was known about autism, for a long while my parents felt that some of the responsibility for Gina's autism was mine, as her symptoms became so much pronounced when I was born."⁶⁸

Task #23: The students pick three words that are critical in the chapter and justify their choices.

Task 24: Chapter 33: The Sun and the Moon

Standard: ELA SCOS: RL.5.2

In this chapter, Natalie, who is drawing moons and almost starts a seizure, goes to say goodbye to Onion, the convict she actually loves. At the very end of the chapter, Moose reveals to the reader, for the first time, Natalie's age: She is sixteen years old and not ten as her mom pretends her to be!

Task #24: The students explain why Natalie seems obsessed with moons in this chapter.

Task 25: Chapter 34: Happy Birthday

Standard: ELA SCOS: W.5.3

In this chapter, the Flanagans, Piper, Annie and Theresa celebrate Natalie's birthday. Moose gives her a math workbook, Piper a bag of buttons, the dad a book about birds with an enormous index and her mom a book bag with her name embroidered on the front.

Task #25: The students imagine a present that they would offer to Natalie, submit a written explanation and design a birthday card for her.

Task 26: Chapter 35: The Truth

Standard: ELA SCOS: W.5.1 and Standard: ELA SCOS: RL.5.3

This chapter ends with this incredible revelation: Natalie knows, she has known all along, that she is: "sixteen at two thirty-one today"⁶⁹, despite her mom many efforts to make her believe she is only ten.

Task #26: The students contrast Moose's mom arguments versus his regarding Natalie's age. Then they give their opinion about the situation: Who do they agree with? Why?

Task 27: Chapter 36: Waiting

Standard: ELA SCOS: W.5.3

At the beginning of this chapter, Natalie’s mom is “radiant” (page 195). The second interview with Mr. Purdy, the headmaster of the Esther P. Marinoff School, went really well: “Natalie was wonderful”⁷⁰. The family now waits to know whether or not she has been accepted into the school.

Task #27: The students tell a time when they waited anxiously for an important object, person or event.

Task 28: Chapter 37: Carrie Kelly

Standard: ELA SCOS: W.5.1

Natalie has not been accepted to the Esther P. Marinoff School. The family is devastated. Moose calls Carrie Kelly, Natalie’s therapist, to thank her for the wonderful work she has done with his sister. On page 200, he says: “You’ve really helped my sister.”⁷¹

Task #28: The students write about an important figure in their life.

Task 29: Chapter 38: What happened?

Standard: ELA SCOS: W.5.3

In this chapter, Moose tells his friends that he has written a letter to Al Capone asking him to help his sister get into the Esther P. Marinoff School.

Task #29: The students write a biopoem about Natalie⁷² (see [appendix 8](#)). This assignment will show how well the students know her at this point in the book.

Task 30: Chapter 40: Al Capone Does My Shirts

Standard: ELA SCOS: RL.5.1

In this chapter, Moose learned that Natalie has been accepted in the Esther P. Marinoff School against all odds. The following day, he finds a piece of paper in his shirt that says: “Done.”⁷³!

Task #30: This chapter has the same title as the book. The students reflect on these following questions: Who wrote this piece of paper? How do you know? Is it a good title? Why? Give another title to the book and explain why you think it is a captivating title.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

[The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) (CRPD) was adopted by the United Nations on December 13 2006. Its 50 articles state that people with disabilities should be treated fairly and should benefit from the same rights as any other fellow human⁷⁴.

The Convention defines “persons with disabilities” as: “(...) those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers

may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with other.”⁷⁵ As a class, we will read some of the articles of the CRPD and will answer to this question: Which freedom is denied to Natalie? The most obvious one being: The right to education. Did you know that according to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO): “Ninety percent of children with disabilities in developing countries do not attend school”⁷⁶?

At this point in the unit, the class will debate this question: Do you think Natalie could attend a regular school like E.E. Waddell Language Academy? If she were actually ten, could she be part of our class? Why or why not? What would you do to welcome her? In my homeroom class, I have a student who is autistic. He is able to speak in both English and French, however he does not talk much, is very shy and, even though his social behavior has improved a lot over the last few years, he sometimes reacts toward his peers with aggressivity, impulsiveness, not understanding their intentions. Since, my English class interacts every day with a classmate who has ASD, I wonder whether they will make the correlation and how they will react during the debate.

In the States, parents of disabled children had to fight for a place in public education for their children. A series of laws eventually ensured that their rights are now guaranteed. In 1965, children with disabilities got access to public education with the passing of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act⁷⁷. In 1975, Congress approved the Education for All Handicapped Children Act that provided federal funding to states to meet the needs of disabled children. The law was amended in 1990 and changed its name to IDEA⁷⁸ (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act). It was revised again in 1997 and 2004 to improve the education for children with disabilities and to educate them in the least restricted environment, which means children with disabilities are to be placed in general education as long as the necessary supports are in place⁷⁹. A few years after IDEA was introduced, IEP’s were implemented in public schools. These Individual Educational Plans are tailored to meet the needs of the students and are mandatory at the state and federal levels⁸⁰.

We will also look and discuss some of the myths and stereotypes about people with disabilities, and will contrast them with the character of Natalie and/or persons with disabilities that the students may know⁸¹. We will come to the conclusion that these myths are just myths, totally untrue:

- People with disabilities cannot live on their own.
Open discussion.
- People with disabilities are to be pitied.
Open discussion: Possible reflection: Do you like to be pitied? If no, why would you pity someone else?
- People with disabilities are helpless.
Open discussion.
- People with disabilities are cursed/disability is evil.
Open discussion. Possible reflection: This is simply mean. Christina Raiti, in an article on “Evolution of Autism in Public Schooling”⁸², explains how in the 1930’s some people believed that disabled children were the devil’s children as a result of their parents’ sins before the child’s birth⁸³.

- People with disabilities cannot go to school.
Open discussion. Possible reflection: Natalie’s parents fight throughout the book for Natalie to be accepted into the Esther P. Marinoff School knowing it is the only hope for their daughter to become an independent adult.
- People with disabilities are better off staying at home.
Open discussion. Possible reflection: How staying at home will help them socially? In the book, Carrie Kelly, Natalie’s therapist, recommends that Natalie takes part in the life of the children on the island. Thanks to this advice, Natalie gradually becomes an essential part of Moose’s group of friends and starts to make significant progress.
- People with disabilities will never be able to work.
Open discussion. Possible reflection: In my community, there is a thrift shop run by people with disabilities.
- People with disabilities need to be cured.
Open discussion. Possible reflection: As we have seen before, the Autism Spectrum Disorder is not curable but it is treatable. The sooner the child is diagnosed the better chances he/she has to make real progress.
- People with disabilities cannot play sports.
Open discussion. Possible reflection: The Paralympic Games have shown to the world that people with disabilities can indeed play sports.
- People with disabilities will never get married or have children.
Open discussion: What do you think about that?
- People with disabilities are stupid.
Open discussion: Natalie is extremely intelligent. She not only has an extraordinary math ability, but is also very perceptive. The episode when the reader realizes that she has known her age all along is quite revealing.
- People with disabilities are children forever.
Open discussion: Possible reflection: Natalie’s mom tries very hard for her daughter to be ten years old all her life, fortunately she eventually realizes that it is wrong.

What about the language that we use when we talk about people with disabilities? For the very reason that we live in a world in which the president of the United States mocks with impunity, on national television, a disabled journalist children have to understand that words matter a great deal. If we want to show respect to our fellow humans, we have to watch our tongue. In the following activity, the students match pairs of words: The “DO SAY” words with the “DO NOT SAY” words (see [appendix 9](#)). This part of the unit is adapted from the Advocate for Human Rights’ lesson plan titled: *Making the Grade Understanding Accessibility at Your School*⁸⁴. In this lesson, the Advocate for Human Rights stresses the importance to use a “Person First Language”, that focuses on the person rather than the disability⁸⁵. It is the difference in saying “the autistic child” and “a child with autism”⁸⁶.

I will end this section of the unit with two activities. The first one, found on the UNICEF website, invites students to unscramble words to discover this crucial message: “We are all different and all have different abilities, and we all have the same rights.”⁸⁷ (see [appendix 10](#)). For the second activity, that comes from the website on the Advocate for Human Rights⁸⁸, the

students receive a fact sheet and a quiz on disability rights that they complete in groups of three (see [appendix 11](#)).

Culminating Project and Assessment: The Shoe Box

This final project leads the students to reflect on the whole book, and serves as assessment. For this assignment, the students need a shoe box. They will use the five sides and the interior of the box. On the top of the box, they give another title to the book (they can certainly use the one that they created for task 30, if they choose to complete it) and create another cover. On one of the lateral side, they summarize the book. On the opposite side, they give their opinion on the book. On the fourth side, they tell what they have learned about the Autism Spectrum Disorder and how they will advocate for people with disabilities in the future. On the fifth side, they pick five words that, they believe, are critical in the book, give a definition, make a sentence for each and explain why they picked them. Finally, inside the box, they gather objects⁸⁹ that represent in some way Natalie's life or/and personality, and give a written explanation. I suggest to give at least one to two weeks to the students to work on this project. Let them share their final product in groups of three or four. I plan to grade their work with the rubric that you can find under [appendix 12](#).

APPENDIX 1

This curriculum unit, built around the theme of autism, the book *Al Capone Does My Shirts, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, focuses on the 5th grade North Carolina English Language Arts Standard Course of Study, mainly the reading literature, the writing, the listening and the speaking standards.

The Reading Standards for Literature

R.L.5.1: Quote accurately from a text when explaining from a text what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

At the beginning of the unit, the students make a prediction based on the title, the cover and the summary of the book. The analysis of the book is structured around 30 tasks many of which address this challenging standard: task #1, 2, 7, 9, 14, 15, 17, 19, 20, 26 and 30. We also focus on this standard in the culminating project when the students gather in a shoe box objects that represent Natalie's life and/or personality and gave a written explanation.

R.L.5.2: Determine a theme of a story, drama or poem from details in the text, including how characters in a story or drama respond to challenges or how the speaker in a poem reflects upon a topic, summarize the text.

This standard is addressed in task 24 and in 2 tasks of the culminating project (the shoe box): The creation of a new cover and title for the book, and the summary of the story.

R.L.5.3: Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings or events in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text.

This standard is addressed in task 4 when the students have to compare the two main characters. It is also addressed in task 26 when they have to contrast Moose and his mom's arguments regarding Natalie's age.

R.L.5.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, recognizing specific word choices that contribute to meaning and tone.

With task 8, the students reflect on a specific simile in the text and with task 15, they reflect on the tone of the chapter. With task 23, they pick and explain the three most important words in the chapter according to them. With the culminating project (the shoe box), they pick 5 critical words in the book, make a sentence and explain why they are important.

The Writing Standards

Throughout the curriculum unit, the students write and focus on the following standards:

W.5.1: Write opinion pieces on topics or text supporting a point of view with reasons and information.

At the beginning of the unit, they reflect by writing on this sentence from Dr. Seuss: “A person’s a person no matter how small.” They also focus on this standard when they select the right that they believe is the most important in *the Convention on the Rights of the Child* and explain why. During the analysis of the book, they focus on standard 5.1 with tasks # 16, 26 and 28. At the end of the curriculum unit, in the culminating project they give their opinion on the entire book.

W.5.2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

With task 13, they write a letter to Moose’s best friend adopting Moose’s perspective. With task 21, they imagine and write an interview between a reporter and one of the characters. In the culminating project of the curriculum unit they write what they have learned about Autism Spectrum Disorder and they explain how they will advocate for people with disabilities in the future.

W.5.3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective techniques, descriptive details and clear event sequences.

Several times, the students are invited to share one aspect of their life: Task # 5, 6, 10, 12, 15, 29.

W.5.5 & W.5.6: Conduct short research projects that use several sources to build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic/Recall relevant information from experiences or gather relevant information from print and digital sources; summarize or paraphrase information in notes and finished work.

During the analysis of the book, the students get to research about the penitentiary Alcatraz, the year 1935 (task 1) and about Al Capone (task 3).

The Listening and Speaking Standards

S.L.5.1: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on grade 5 topics and texts, building on other’s ideas and expressing their own clearly/Follow agreed upon rules for discussions and carry out assigned roles. (b)/Pose and respond to specific questions by making comments that contribute to the discussion and elaborate on the remarks of others. (c)

This standard is at the core of this curriculum unit since each task is preceded by a reading out loud session and a discussion around the chapters of the book. At the end of the analysis of the book, when we talk about *the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, the students engage in a debate. They also discuss about the language to use and not to use when talking about people with disabilities, and about some of the stereotypes that exist against them.

PLEDGE

I pledge that I will not read ahead *Al Capone Does My Shirts* and I will not read the author's notes, the interviews, or any other book written by Gennifer Choldenko during the analysis of this book, in order not to ruin the reading experience of my classmates.

Name (PRINT): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 3

Al Capone Does My Shirts by Gennifer Choldenko

Analysis of the book/ Friendly Version of the 30 Tasks Name: _____

Out of these 30 activities, choose 15: one per week. Complete them in your journal.

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| <p>Task 1: Chapter 1: <i>Devil's Island</i> (RL.5.1 & W.5.5)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Describe the setting in a paragraph.2. Find 3-5 interesting facts about Alcatraz and the year 1935.3. What are the clues that the year is 1935? | <p>Task 2: Chapter 2: <i>Errand Boy</i> (RL.5.1)</p> <p>On page 12, Moose says: ““Ten”, I answer. Natalie’s age is always ten. Every year my mom has a party for her and she turns ten again.” What do you think he means? Use evidence from this chapter and chapter 1 to justify your answer.</p> | <p>Task 3: Chapter 3: <i>Trick Monkey</i> (W.5.5 & W.5.6)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Research information on Al Capone on the Duckster website.2. Create a Wanted Poster. |
| <p>Task 4: Chapter 4: <i>Laugh-Nosed Beet</i> (RL.5.3)</p> <p>Compare and contrast the 2 main characters, Moose and Natalie with a Ven-diagram. Use details from chapters 1-4 to find evidence for your answer.</p> | <p>Task 5: Chapter 5: <i>Murderers Darn My Socks</i> (W.5.3)</p> <p>Write about an object you were or are still very attached to.</p> | <p>Task 6: Chapter 7: <i>Big For Seven Grade</i> (W.5.3)</p> <p>Write about a time when you were new in a group and tell the reader how it made you feel.</p> |
| <p>Task 7: Chapter 10: <i>Not Ready</i> (RL.5.1)</p> <p>Make a prediction on the reason why the Flanagans have to go pick up Natalie so soon.</p> | <p>Task 8: Chapter 11: <i>The Best in the Country</i> (RL.5.4)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Find the simile on page 65.2. Explain why the author uses this specific figure of speech in this context.3. Create another simile or metaphor to describe the situation. | <p>Task 9: Chapter 12: <i>What About the Electric Chair?</i> (RL.5.1)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Using the shirt template given in class, pick a character from the book, design a shirt that represents the character’s personality.2. On the reverse side, describe 3 character traits and explain them by referring to the text. |
| <p>Task 10: Chapter 13: <i>One Woman Commando Unit</i> (W.5.3)</p> <p>Tell the story of a time when your parents or teachers asked you to do something that you did not want to do.</p> | <p>Task 11: Chapter 15: <i>Looking for Scarface</i> (W.5.3)</p> <p>Tell the story of a time when you disobeyed your parents or teachers and did something you were not supposed to do.</p> | <p>Task 12: Chapter 16: <i>Capone Washed Your Shirts</i> (W.5.3)</p> <p>Tell the story of a time when you lied and tell the reader what were the consequences.</p> |

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| <p>Task 13: Chapter 19: <i>Daddy's Little Miss</i> (W.5.2) Write the letter to Pete as if you were Moose.</p> | <p>Task 14: Chapter 20: <i>Warning</i> (RL.5.1) Find the evidence in the chapter that Natalie has become a part of Moose's group of friends, that they have come to love her.</p> | <p>Task 15: Chapter 21: <i>It Never Rains on Monday</i> (RL.5.4) Describe the tone at the beginning and at the end of the chapter.</p> |
| <p>Task 16: Chapter 23: <i>She's Not Cute</i> (W.5.1) Write about your best friend.</p> | <p>Task 17: Chapter 24: <i>Like a Regular Sister</i> (RL.5.1) "105" Natalie keeps repeating this number. Make a guess about its meaning (one paragraph long).</p> | <p>Task 18: Chapter 26: <i>Convict Baseball</i> (W.5.3)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ask one question to Moose, one to Natalie and one to Onion. 2. Answer these 3 questions as if you were these characters. |
| <p>Task 19: Chapter 27: <i>Idiot</i> (RL.5.1) Choose a quote and elaborate on its importance.</p> | <p>Task 20: Chapter 28: <i>Tall for her Age</i> (RL.5.1) Make a hypothesis about Natalie's problem. You can gather evidence in any chapter before chapter 28.</p> | <p>Task 21: Chapter 29: <i>Convict Choir Boy</i> (W.5.2) Write an interview between an imaginary reporter and a character of your choice.</p> |
| <p>Task 22: Chapter 30: <i>Eye</i> (W.5.3) Rewrite the chapter from Natalie's perspective.</p> | <p>Task 23: Chapter 31: <i>My Dad</i> (RL.5.4) Pick 3 words that are very important in this chapter and explain your choice.</p> | <p>Task 24: Chapter 33: <i>The Sun and the Moon</i> (RL.5.2) Why do you think Natalie is obsessed with moons?</p> |
| <p>Task 25: Chapter 34: <i>Happy Birthday</i> (W.5.3)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What would you offer to Natalie for her birthday? Why? 2. Write a card for her as well. | <p>Task 26: Chapter 35: <i>The Truth</i> (RL.5.3 & W.5.1)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Contrast Moose and his mom arguments regarding Natalie's age. 2. Give your opinion about the situation. | <p>Task 27: Chapter 36: <i>Waiting</i> (W.5.3) Tell a story of a time when you waited anxiously for an important person, object or event.</p> |
| <p>Task 28: Chapter 37: <i>Carrie Kelly</i> (W.5.1) Write about an important figure in your life.</p> | <p>Task 29: Chapter 38: <i>What Happened?</i> (W.5.3) Write a biopoem about Natalie.</p> | <p>Task 30: Chapter 40: <i>Al Capone Does My Shirts</i> (RL.5.1) Who wrote this piece of paper? How do you know? Is the title of the book a good title? Why? Give another title and explain why you think it is a good title.</p> |

Appendix 5: Rubric to assess the READING COMPREHENSION tasks

| | Score: A | Score: B | Score: C | Score: D | Score: Needs to be redone |
|---|---|---|--|--|--|
| Reading comprehension and written expression | The student response: Addresses the prompt and provides effective development of the topic. Uses clear reasoning supported by relevant text-based evidence in the development of the topic. Is effectively organized with clear and coherent writing. Uses language effectively to clarify ideas. | The student response: Addresses the prompt and provides mostly effective development of the topic. Uses mostly clear reasoning supported by relevant text-based evidence in the development of the topic. Is organized with mostly clear and coherent writing. Uses language that is mostly effective to clarify ideas. | The student response: Addresses the prompt and provides some development of the topic. Uses some reasoning and text-based evidence in the development of the topic. Demonstrates some organization with somewhat coherent writing. Uses language to express ideas with some clarity. | The student response: Addresses the prompt and provides minimal development of the topic. Uses limited reasoning and text-based evidence in the development of the topic. Demonstrates limited organization and coherence. Uses language to express limited clarity. | The student response: Is undeveloped and/or inappropriate to the task, purpose and audience. Includes little to no text-based evidence. Lacks organization and coherence. Does not use language to express ideas with clarity. |
| Knowledge of language and conventions | The student response to the prompt demonstrates complete command of the convention of standard English at an appropriate level of complexity. There are no errors in mechanics, grammar, and usage. | The student response to the prompt demonstrates full command of the convention of standard English at an appropriate level of complexity. There may be a few minor errors in mechanics, grammar, and usage but meaning is clear. | The student response to the prompt demonstrates some command of the convention of standard English at an appropriate level of complexity. There may be errors in mechanics, grammar, and usage that occasionally impede understanding but the meaning is generally clear. | The student response to the prompt demonstrates limited command of the convention of standard English at an appropriate level of complexity. There may be errors in mechanics, grammar, and usage that often impede understanding. | The student response to the prompt does not demonstrate command of the convention of standard English at an appropriate level of complexity. Frequent and varied errors in mechanics, grammar, and usage impede understanding. |

Resource: Adapted from: Grades 4-5 Parcc Scoring Rubric for prose constructed response (July 2015): <http://parcconline.org/assessments/test-design/ela-literacy/test-specifications-documents>

<https://4.files.edl.io/0c96/06/26/18/212743-d0141dab-6694-4a4a-bedc-e81e125a0bab.pdf>

Appendix 5: Rubric to assess the WRITING tasks

| | Score: A | Score: B | Score: C | Score: the task should be redone. |
|--|---|--|---|---|
| Written Expression | The student response: Is effectively developed and is consistently appropriate to the task. Is effectively organized with clear and coherent writing. Uses language effectively to clarify ideas. | The student response: Is somewhat developed and is generally appropriate to the task. Is organized with mostly clear and coherent writing. Uses language that is mostly effective to clarify ideas. | The student response: Is minimally developed and is limited in its appropriateness to the task. Demonstrates limited organization and coherence. Uses language to express ideas with limited clarity. | The student response: Is undeveloped and inappropriate to the task. Lacks organization and coherence. Does not Use language to express ideas with clarity |
| Knowledge of language and conventions | The student response demonstrates full command of the convention of standard English at an appropriate level of complexity. There may be a few minor errors in mechanics, grammar, and usage but meaning is clear. | The student response to the prompt demonstrates some command of the convention of standard English at an appropriate level of complexity. There may be errors in mechanics, grammar, and usage that occasionally impede understanding but the meaning is generally clear. | The student response to the prompt demonstrates limited command of the convention of standard English at an appropriate level of complexity. There may be errors in mechanics, grammar, and usage that often impede understanding. | The student response to the prompt does not demonstrate command of the convention of standard English at an appropriate level of complexity. Frequent and varied errors in mechanics, grammar, and usage impede understanding. |

Resource: Adapted from: Grades 4-5 Parcc Scoring Rubric for prose constructed response (July 2015):

<http://parconline.org/assessments/test-design/ela-literacy/test-specifications-documents>

<https://4.files.edl.io/0c96/06/26/18/212743-d0141dab-6694-4a4a-bedc-e81e125a0bab.pdf>

Appendix 6

Research the life of Al Capone on the website [Duckster](#). Create a Wanted Poster for him.

Draw a portrait of him or find a picture online. Then complete the following information:

Wanted:

Character name

Time and Place Last Seen

Physical Description

How he acts

Likes

Dislikes

Where he hangs out

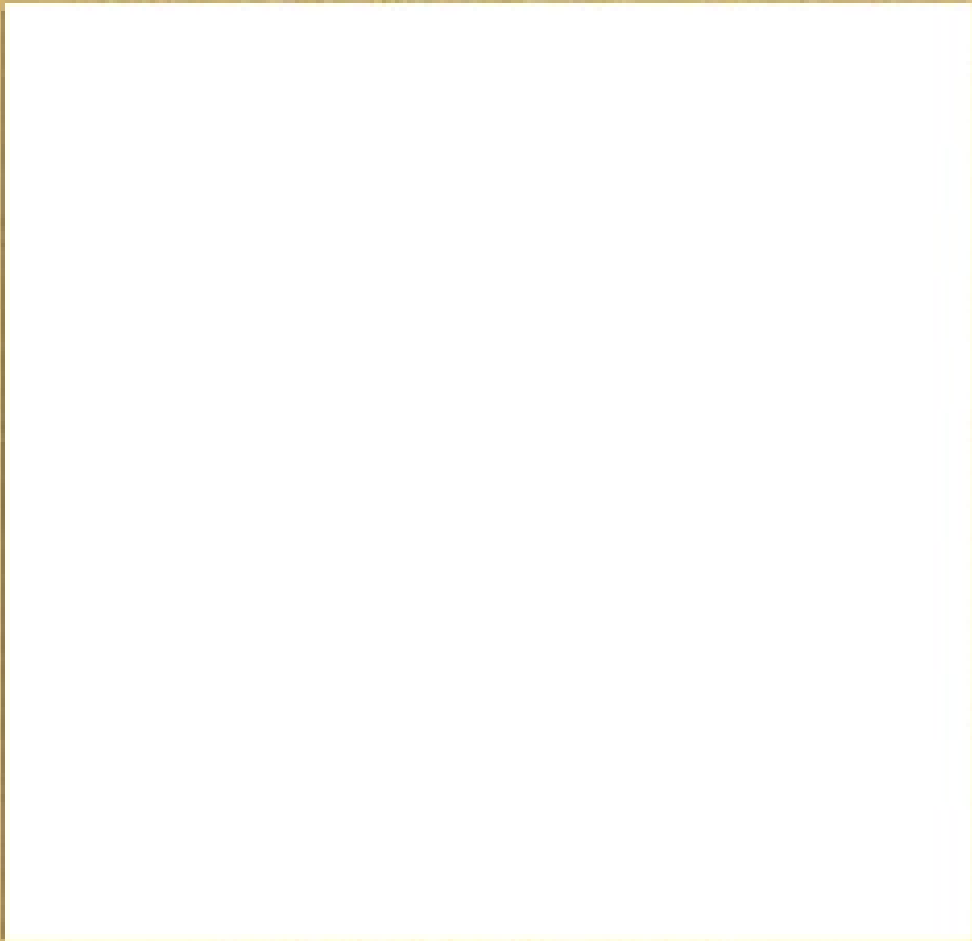
Suspected Whereabouts

Reward amount

Source: <https://dreamskribbler.files.wordpress.com/2009/12/multitextunit.doc>

You may use this template or you may create your own.

WANTED!

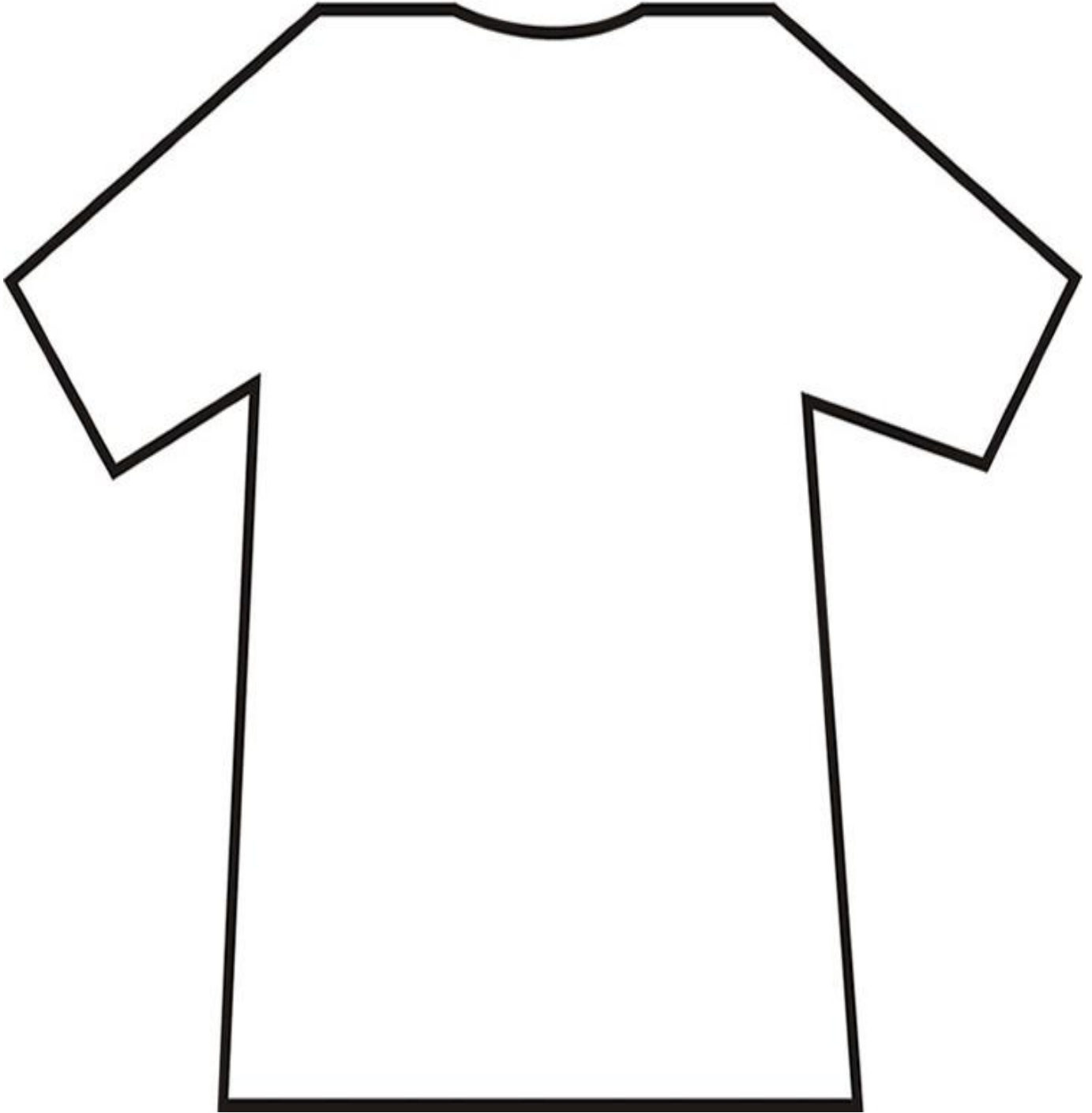


REWARD

\$

Appendix 7

Design a shirt that represents one of the character's personality. On the other side, describe three character traits of this person and justify your answer by referring to the text.



Source: <https://www.driversedirect.com/myspace/tshirttemplate.htm>

Appendix 8: Biopem

Write a biopem as if you were Natalie, Moose's sister.

- Line One** First name
- Line Two** Two or three adjectives that describe the person/object.
- Line Three** Important relationship (daughter of, brother of, friend of, etc.)
- Line Four** Two or three things, people, or ideas that the person/object loved, was attracted to
or interested in
- Line Five** Three feelings the person experienced
- Line Six** Three fears the person experienced
- Line Seven** Accomplishments (who composed...., who discovered ..., etc.)
- Line Eight** Two or three places or people the person wanted to see
- Line Nine** Her residence
- Line Ten** Last name

Source: Rutherford Paula. *Why Didn't Learn This in College?* Second Edition, Just Ask Publications, 2014, page 70.

Appendix 9: Do Say/Do Not Say

Some words can hurt. Choose one of the following **DO NOT SAY** word to match the words in the **DO SAY** column: Sickly, normal/healthy, crippled, slow, mute/dumb, disabled/handicapped, crazy/insane, confined to a wheelchair, is learning disabled, fit, dwarf/midget, invalid/paralytic.

| DO SAY WORDS | DO NOT SAY WORDS |
|---|-------------------------|
| 1. Child with disability | |
| 2. Without speech, nonverbal | |
| 3. Developmental delay | |
| 4. Emotional disorder or mental illness | |
| 5. Uses a wheelchair | |
| 6. Has a learning disability | |
| 7. Non-disabled | |
| 8. Has a physical disability | |
| 9. Seizure | |
| 10. Medically involved or chronically ill | |
| 11. Paralyzed | |
| 12. Person of short stature | |

Source: The Advocate for Human Rights, 2010.

https://www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org/uploads/rights_of_persons_with_disabilities_lesson_plan.pdf

Appendix 9: Do Say/Do Not Say: Answer key

| DO SAY WORDS | DO NOT SAY WORDS |
|---|-------------------------------|
| 1. Child with disability | Disabled or handicapped child |
| 2. Without speech, nonverbal | Mute, dumb |
| 3. Developmental delay | Slow |
| 4. Emotional disorder or mental illness | Crazy or insane |
| 5. Uses a wheelchair | Confined in a wheelchair |
| 6. Has a learning disability | Is learning disabled |
| 7. Non-disabled | Normal, healthy |
| 8. Has a physical disability | Crippled |
| 9. Seizure | Fits |
| 10. Medically involved or chronically ill | Sickly |
| 11. Paralyzed | Invalid, paralytic |
| 12. Person of short stature | Dwarf or midget |

Source: The Advocate for Human Rights, 2010.

https://www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org/uploads/rights_of_persons_with_disabilities_lesson_plan.pdf

Appendix 10

Unscramble the words and form a sentence with them.

ew _____ rea _____ lal

_____ dan _____ entffdeir

_____ lla _____ vhea

_____ biiialtes _____ deefrntf

_____ adn _____

aehv _____ lla _____ ew

_____ het _____

igthrs _____ easm _____

Source: https://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Its_About_Ability_final_.pdf

Appendix 11: Fact Sheet on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the United States

WHO ARE PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES?

The United Nations (U.N.) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) defines persons with disabilities as “those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.” According to the U.N., “Everyone is likely to experience disability at some point during his/her lifetime because of illness, accident, or aging.”

DOES U.S. LAW RECOGNIZE DISABILITY RIGHTS?

The U.S. Constitution guarantees equal protection to all citizens regardless of characteristics such as gender, race, or disability. Congress also enacted specific statutory protections for persons with disabilities, including the most comprehensive of these, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). These laws prohibit discrimination against persons with disabilities in any public program, private housing, access to polling places, education, and the workplace. The laws require schools, landlords, employers, and governments to make their services accessible to people with disabilities by providing reasonable accommodations or modifications. Furthermore, many states drafted their own laws that address the rights of persons with disabilities. In addition to national law, the U.S. is also legally bound to international treaties, including the ICCPR, which grant basic human rights to all people.

IS THE U.S. FULFILLING THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES?

Despite legal protections for persons with disabilities, millions of Americans are deprived of their rights due to a lack of awareness and a failure to provide the disabled with reasonable accommodation in many areas of their lives. They still face considerable levels of discrimination in access to services, employment, education, and other areas. Today, more than 50 million people in the U.S., roughly 1 in 6, personally experience some form of disability, a number that is growing rapidly as the population ages. Safety and Security Persons with disabilities face an increased risk of being victims of violent crime. Women with disabilities in particular experience a high rate of domestic violence (...). Children are also at high risk of abuse. Youth with disabilities are between 1.5 and 3.5 times more likely to have experienced abuse and neglect, and to be surrendered into the child welfare system. Persons with disabilities are also frequently denied their right to protection in situations of risk such as natural disasters. According to a study on emergency management, a majority of Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) emergency managers were not trained in special needs populations, including persons with mobility impairments. This lack of consideration for persons with disabilities proved disastrous during Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005. Estimates show that approximately 73% of the

Appendix 11: Fact Sheet on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the United States

Hurricane Katrina-related fatalities in New Orleans were people over the age of 60, even though those people only made up 15% of the population. Experts suggest that this happened because many of those people had physical, medical, or sensory limitations that made them more vulnerable.

Equal Protection and Due Process

Social service organizations are often unprepared to address the needs of persons with disabilities. Battered women's shelters frequently lack staff who are trained to deal with their unique needs, and police and other law-enforcement officials receive only minimal training on accommodations needed for them. When interviewing victims with developmental disabilities, investigators frequently fail to extract critical information about the incident and perpetrator, and may make inappropriate assessments regarding the victim's credibility. According to a 2001 survey by the Boston Globe, only 5% of serious crimes against people with disabilities were prosecuted, compared to 70% for similar crimes against people without disabilities.

Non-Discrimination

Persons with disabilities face both direct and systematic forms of discrimination. Disability harassment may take the form of daily mockery, insults, shunning, and physical abuse, and leads to the isolation and disenfranchisement of persons with disabilities. In schools, instances of teachers or principals leading or encouraging the harassment or intentionally instituting policies to punish students for having a disability have been reported. The U.S. government has recently started prosecuting cases of disability harassment in schools and workplaces, but many courts still refuse to consider disability harassment a serious crime comparable to race or sex harassment, leaving victims without a remedy.

Accessibility

Accessibility is a key component to fighting discrimination against persons with disabilities. According to the Department of Transportation, only 55-60% of public transit buses are equipped with wheelchair lifts. Even for those buses that are equipped, access is still denied because the lifts are often in disrepair and drivers lack the training needed to operate them. People with disabilities are also frequently denied their requests for reasonable modifications or accommodations necessary to make housing fully accessible. Nearly 20% of housing providers with on-site parking refused to make a reasonable accommodation of providing a designated accessible parking space for a wheelchair user. In 2008, 44% of the record 10,552 housing discrimination cases filed were complaints from persons with disabilities. Many disabled persons also face barriers at polling places because the sites are inaccessible or the voting machine is incompatible.

Education

Educational outcomes for children with disabilities have seen some improvement with the 2004 revisions to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). However, disabled children are more likely to be subject to corporal punishment in schools. Of the 223,190 public school students nationwide who were paddled during the 2006-7 school year, at least 41,972, or about 19%, were students with disabilities, who make up 14% of all students. Students with disabilities are still less likely to graduate from high school and only 12.5% of working age people with disabilities have a bachelor's degree, compared to the national average of 30.3%. Many colleges lack support services and awareness of disability issues, and are inconsistent in their interpretations of accommodation requirements. Many disabled students are also forced to cover the extra cost of their accommodations and may require additional time to graduate, increasing the final cost of their education.

Housing

Housing discrimination for people with disabilities is pervasive. There is very little in the way of affordable, accessible housing for people with disabilities nationwide. One study found that over half of persons with disabilities faced discrimination in housing inquiries compared to similar, non-disabled home-seekers. They receive less encouragement to pursue a rental agreement and are less likely to be offered an application than the non-disabled customers. Some states attempt to force disabled adults into institutions rather than provide personal care attendants. Providing this kind of community-based care is essential to allow persons with disabilities to live full and independent lives and often is less expensive than the institutional option.

Health

Despite the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) regulations a disproportionate number of people with disabilities face barriers to quality health care. These barriers may be structural and/or communicative in nature. Many health care facilities do not provide assisting technologies and people with disabilities often find themselves battling insurance companies to provide needed treatments and accommodations. According to a study in California, 22% of persons with disabilities reported difficulty accessing health care facilities and 12.9% reported unfair treatment by health care providers because of their disability. In a wide reaching study of disability health care coverage, those with intellectual and developmental disabilities were three times more likely than those without to report unmet health care needs.

Work

The employment rate for persons with disabilities in 2006 was at least 40 percentage points lower than the employment rate of working-age individuals without disabilities. 70% of disabled people who are unemployed cite discrimination in the workplace and lack of transportation as major factors that prevent them from working. Studies have also shown that people with disabilities who find jobs earn less than their coworkers and are less likely to be promoted. This negatively affects the economic and life conditions of people with disabilities. On average, 24.7% of working-age people with disabilities live in poverty, as compared to 9% of those without. Unemployment is especially high for persons with mental illness, and they face higher levels of employment discrimination than those with other disability labels as well.

Source: https://www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org/uploads/disability_rights_fact_sheet1.pdf

Appendix 11: Quiz Sheet on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the United States

Answer to these questions in group of three. Use the fact sheet to help you.

1. *True or False: Everyone is likely to experience disability at some point in his/ her life.*
A. True B. False
2. *Discrimination against persons with disabilities is prohibited in...?*
A. The Workplace B. Education C. Private Housing D. Public Programs E. All of the Above
3. *What percentage of serious crimes against disabled persons are prosecuted?*
A. 45% B. 30% C. 15% D. 5%
4. *How many people in the United States currently experience some sort of disability?*
A. 20 Million B. 30 Million C. 40 Million D. 50 Million
5. *True or False: It is more economical for persons with disabilities to attend postsecondary education than it is for those without.*
A. True B. False
6. *78% of people without disabilities report being employed full or part time. What percentage of people with disabilities report this?*
A. 78% B. 59% C. 46% D. 35%
7. *True or False: Schools, landlords, employers, and governments only have to make their services accessible to people with disabilities if they can afford to do so.*
A. True B. False
8. *Accessibility means equal access to which of the following?*
A. The Physical Environment B. Transportation C. Information D. Technology
E. All of the Above
9. *What percentage of the housing discrimination cases filed in the 2008 fiscal year were complaints from persons with disabilities?*
A. 11% B. 22% C. 33% D. 44%
10. *True or False: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights protects the rights of all persons, including those with disabilities.*
A. True B. False

Source: https://www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org/uploads/disability_rights_quiz.pdf

Appendix 11: Answers to the Quiz Sheet on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the United States

1 – **True.** According to the UN’s Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Handbook for Parliamentarians, “Everyone is likely to experience disability at some point during his/her lifetime because of illness, accident, or aging.”

2 – **All of the Above.** The laws Congress has enacted as specific statutory protections for people with disabilities, including the Americans with Disabilities Act, prohibit discrimination against persons with disabilities in any public program, in private housing, in education, in the workplace, etc.

3 – **5%.** According to a 2001 survey by the Boston Globe in Massachusetts, only 5% of serious crimes against people with disabilities were prosecuted, compared to 70% for similar crimes against people without disabilities.

4 – **50 Million.** Roughly 1 in 6 people in the United States personally experience some form of disability, a number that is growing rapidly as the population ages.

5 – **False.** Many disabled students are forced to cover the extra cost of their accommodations. They may also require additional time to graduate which increases the final cost of their education.

6 – **35%.** According to a 2004 survey, only 35% of people with disabilities report being employed full or part time, compared to 78% of people without disabilities.

7 – **False.** The laws in the United States require schools, landlords, employers, and governments to make their services available to people with disabilities by providing reasonable accommodations or modifications.

8 – **All of the Above.** Accessibility is equal access to the physical environment, transportation, information, communications, technology, and other services open to the public.

9 – **44%.** Of the record 10,552 housing discrimination cases filed in the 2008 fiscal year, 44% were complaints from persons with disabilities.

10 – **True.** The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was written to protect the human rights of all humans, including those with disabilities.¹

Source: https://www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org/uploads/disability_rights_quiz.pdf

Appendix 12: Rubric for the Shoe Box

Name of the student: _____

Date: _____

| | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| The student has invented another judicious title. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| The student has created a creative cover. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| The summary represents the entire story and is easy to understand. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| The student gives his/her opinion, commenting on the book's strengths and weaknesses and provides many specific examples from the book to support his/her opinion. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| The student explains clearly what he/she has learned about Autism Spectrum Disorder. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| The student explains clearly how he/she would advocate for people with disabilities. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| The student has 5 definitions and 5 complete sentences and explains why he/she has chosen these words. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Inside the box, the student has gathered a few objects that represent Natalie's life and/or personality. The written explanation justifies clearly the connection between the objects and Natalie. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Total: /40

Teacher's Comment: _____

Parent's signature: _____

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Alexander struggles with the fact that his brother, Benjamin, has autism and gets a lot of attention from his parents and from special teachers.

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In this book (ages 12-15), Jenny explains her life with her autistic brother, Ezra.

Choldenko Gennifer. *Al Capone Does My Shirts*, Puffin Books, 2014.
The book tells the story of Moose Flanagan, a twelve-year old teenager, and his autistic sister Natalie who both live on the island of Alcatraz in 1935.

Dr. Seuss. *Horton Hears A Who!* Random House, New York, 1982.
Horton, the elephant, tries to convince his friends of the forest that there is someone who needs their help on a speck of dust and that they must protect him.

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The book highlights the life of famous scientists, writers, musicians who had autism. People like Albert Einstein, Lewis Carroll, Isaac Newton and Hans Christian Andersen.

Ely Lesley *Looking after Louis* Albert Whitman & Company, Illinois, 2004.

Louis, an autistic student, joins a regular classroom. The students in the classroom learn how to accept him despite his differences and Louis eventually makes friends.

Lehman-Wilzig Tami. *Nathan Blows Out the Hanukkah Candles*, KarBen Publishing, 2011.

It is Hanukkah. Jacob's parents invite the new neighbors to celebrate Hanukkah with them. Jacob is afraid that his brother who is autistic will ruin the celebration by blowing out the Menorah's candles.

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"CDC Increases Estimate of Autism's Prevalence by 15 percent, to 1 in 59 Children.

Autism Speaks Calls on Nation's Leaders to Adequately Fund Critically Needed Research and Support Services." *Autism Speaks*, April 26, 2018.

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