Reflective Commentary

1. **How did you develop ideas?**

I spent a lot of time developing ideas away from the keyboard actually. Planning for this unit started way back when I was still creating my Yearlong Plan. As I created the units for my Yearlong Plan, this unit really stood out to me because I thought it would be a good challenge for me to do a unit that involved teaching a narrative. I see myself as a good writer, but I wanted some practice with teaching writing. Ever since I decided this would be my in-depth unit plan, I have been coming up with ideas in my head. Beyond that, I developed ideas by looking back at how narrative writing has been taught to me in the past as well as referring to *Teaching English By Design* and *Tim O’Brien in the Classroom,* along with my other education textbooks for general ideas and specific activities.

1. **How did you make decisions as you planned?**

A lot of my decisions we made based on my overall unit calendar. I felt that the number of days in my unit as well as the number of minutes in each class period really governed what lessons I could teach and when. Another way I made decisions was prioritizing. I knew that I wanted the main focus of this unit to be on the narrative writing, so while I still included dialectical journals and we read the entire novel, the main focus is on the narrative writing. To incorporate the novel into this focus, I used *The Things They Carried* as a mentor text and a good example of style for the students as well as teaching different writing elements using the novel for examples. You could almost say there is a much stronger focus on the novel as a piece of *writing* than as a piece of *literature,* which was a call I had to make. There is so much I could do with the text, but I had to make choices because there’s only so much time in the classroom.

1. **How did you address questions—including lingering questions?**

I worked through a lot of my questions by talking with my peers and seeing how they would handle things or teach things. I still wonder if it is too hopeful to expect that students will be doing almost all the class reading outside of class. Is this a realistic expectation? I think this is a question that has to be answered on an individual basis, based on what students I have in a given class. Another lingering question (more like concern) I have is how am I going to be able to adapt this unit for next semester? How will I be able to cut down on the reading and only use selected excerpts and still cover all the important parts? I also feel like I needed more anticipatory sets. I wonder how do you come up with an anticipatory set for every lesson? Is that even realistic? Do I really need one for every lesson?

1. **How do you think this unit plan will play out in the classroom?**

I’m actually going to get to see how this unit plays out in the classroom relatively soon. I am adapting this unit during winter break in order to use it in my student teaching placement next semester (Spring 2014). I think it will be interesting to see how I can make this unit fit into a different context with different limitations than my imagined context. The unit will really come to life when I teach it next semester because I won’t be planning for a hypothetical situation anymore; I will be planning lessons for real students who I know really well. In this respect, I think the planning will be easier because I will know what I need to teach and what my students already have a handle on. On the other hand, this will pose a whole new set of challenges because depending on their pace and ability, I may have to add extra days for certain lessons or come up with additional activities because they got through what I planned so quickly. It will definitely be a learning experience next semester when I take this unit plan out into the real world.

1. **Anything else you want to share?**

I found this assignment super beneficial, and I learned a lot from the process of creating my unit. It was really eye-opening to see how much work goes into not only an overall unit plan, but especially the day-by-day planning and creating of the handouts, assignment sheets, and grading criteria. I can only imagine how time consuming grading is going to be! I know that the skills I gained from doing this assignment will be extremely valuable to me throughout my career. I can see why all my education professors tell us that in order to break the rules (not write word-for-word lesson plans) one must first follow the rules (write out every step), and that is exactly what I did for this assignment. This assignment was a ton of work, but also a lot of fun! It has gotten me excited for all the units I will get to plan in the future! ☺