

# Minnesota Writing Project

## --- Demonstration Lesson ---

**Title:** Using Multiple Intelligences in the AP Literature (or any) English Classroom

**Grade appropriate:** 9-12

**Approximate Length of time to complete lesson/unit:** 2-3 class periods to introduce the theory of multiple intelligences; one to one-and-a-half weeks to complete multiple intelligence projects on any novel or play

### **Learning objectives and significance of lesson:**

1. To teach students various ways of demonstrating knowledge of a literary text
2. To teach students about multiple intelligence theory
3. To encourage students to use and develop their own multiple intelligences
4. To stimulate student creativity and expression
5. To encourage students to experiment with voice and audience

### **Brief summary/outline:**

During the first week or so of the school year, I introduce Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences to my AP English Literature and Composition students. I give a mini-lecture on IQ tests of the past, previous definitions of intelligence, and how schools traditionally have focused on just two: verbal and math, as evidenced even in the SAT or ACT tests with which my students are familiar. We then discuss how intelligence is broader even than what a GPA measures, and this leads into presenting Gardner's theory.

1. I give students a handout listing and defining each of the eight multiple intelligences, along with a brief list of the types of people or careers which connect to each one.
2. Next, students take a Multiple Intelligence Inventory (80 questions) to measure their own intelligences.
3. I then give students a Multiple Intelligence Inventory Answer Key which helps them tabulate which intelligences are their dominant or lesser-developed ones.

(Note: you can download both items mentioned in #2 and #3 by clicking on this link:

<http://mwp2008.pbwiki.com/Monday,+July+14th> (scroll down to middle of page to find them)

4. As a class, discuss what the inventory revealed (anything new or surprising? confirm what you knew?)
5. I then have students select a small group and assign them the task of making a Multiple Intelligence Poster. Each group is given one of the eight intelligences and their task is to create a poster which hangs in front of the classroom for the entire year. The poster must include:
  - a clearly labeled heading for the particular intelligence
  - a definition of the particular intelligence
  - characteristics of people who demonstrate this intelligence
  - photos or pictures of well-known real people who demonstrate this intelligence (either historical or contemporary)
6. Now that students have a good understanding of multiple intelligences, I then assign a multiple intelligence project for *The Odyssey*, their summer reading assignment for the class. Students have to integrate at least two of the intelligences into their project. I give them a brief list of possible ideas which itemizes a project that would work for each intelligence, but this is meant to be a springboard for their own ideas, not to restrict the possibilities. For *The Odyssey*, some successful past projects have included:
  - writing an original song about a character; then perform live or record it (musical and linguistic)
  - make a photo album of Odysseus' trip (spatial and linguistic)
  - research and report on various plants mentioned in *The Odyssey* (naturalist and linguistic)

- write a poem or series of poems about main characters, put into booklet (linguistic and spatial)
  - rehearse and present a scene (bodily-kinesthetic and linguistic)
  - calculate the number of days Odysseus spent with each adventure (mathematical)
  - find musical selections for various moods or episodes and write an analysis of why they are fitting (musical and linguistic)
  - write a diary or journal of your own personal odyssey, connecting it to the text (intrapersonal and linguistic)
  - create a diorama or a scene, or make a board game (spatial and linguistic)
  - write and illustrate a children's book version (spatial and linguistic)
7. A key concept I emphasize with students is that the project has to demonstrate understanding or knowledge of the text. It has to be grounded in something substantial and give evidence of serious thought about the text. For example, they can't merely make a popsicle stick boat for *The Odyssey* since that reveals nothing about their understanding or appreciation of the text. It doesn't enlarge their knowledge.
  7. Students usually have about a week to one-and-a-half weeks to complete the project. They present their projects to the class for all to see, and they are evaluated using a rubric that the class generated together.
  8. Throughout the rest of the year, I will assign MI projects on various literary texts we read, typically about two or three times each semester. With each one, I will gradually increase the number of intelligences that have to be displayed.
  9. At the end of the year, after the AP Exam, students work together on a final cumulative MI project which is to create a parody of the works we've read throughout the year and using as many intelligences as they can. Students then perform these for the class or make their skit into a short film for viewing.

### **Related Resources:**

- Gardner, Howard. *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences (10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition)*. New York: BasicBooks (a division of HarperCollins Publishers, Inc.), 1993.
- - -. *Intelligence Reframed: Multiple Intelligences for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. New York: Basic Books, a division of the Perseus Books Group, 1999.
- Lazear, David. *Eight Ways of Teaching: The Artistry of Teaching with Multiple Intelligences (3<sup>rd</sup> edition)*. Arlington Heights, IL: Skylight Training and Publishing. 1999.

### **Possible extensions or adaptations for different purposes/student needs:**

Once students understand and are familiar with the multiple intelligences, these project ideas could be used for any assigned text in any course (in place of traditional tests).

I also have AP students take turns leading class discussion on various short stories and encourage them to use their multiple intelligences when they do so. Some students have played music that connects to the short story, acted out portions of it, or presented visual images to connect to themes, symbols, or characters.

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