

Ella Minnow Pea Action Project Teacher Guide

Background information

Mark Dunn's 2010 novel **Ella Minnow Pea** is set in the fictionalized country of Nollop, a place off the coast of North Carolina where intellect and vocabulary are prized. This guide works as an action project for students who have read the novel and incorporates both writing and presentation components and can be completed as a class wide activity or an individual action project.

Activity purpose

This lesson is by no means a comprehensive unit plan or even a guide to the novel, but is rather an action project to be completed at the halfway point or conclusion of the novel. The goal of the activity is for students to attempt to incorporate Nollop's laws into their day-to-day experiences so that they may better grasp the struggle of the characters. This project may prove difficult for some students and alternate assignments may be needed for some students.

Task

Students must follow Nollop's "rules" for an entire day and journal about the experience. Because the loss of the letters proves particularly troublesome toward the end of the book, I have the students go without the letters b,d,f,j,k,q, and z as the communication can be maintained (albeit difficultly) with those letters missing. I have students must also present their findings to the class in a presentation lasting at least 2 minutes and using no notes. This presentation must also go without the letters for the first 30 seconds. A presentation rubric is attached to the handout so students are aware of what they will be graded on. I included my original handout with dates so teachers may see the parameters of the assignment. These will obviously need to be changed. An alternate assignment could be made by having students journal their experiences of their week with these guidelines or completing all work for a week following these guidelines if you wanted a class wide activity. The whole class activity would supplement class discussion for the presentation.

Follow up

This activity can be enhanced when incorporated with other action projects or individual novel assignments. I pair it with work on the **Scarlett Letter**, **The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime**, or **Frankenstein** so students are presented with different character experience action projects.

Ella Minnow Pea Project

Objective: The purpose of Dunn’s novel is to highlight totalitarianism, good citizenship vs. freedom, and freedom of speech in general. While we can’t fully replicate the experience of living in Nollop, Dunn wants us to understand the devolution of language through excessive rules. We will attempt to replicate that through this project. Action must be done on one of the following days: 11/10, 11/12, 11/13, 11/19, 11/20, 11/21

Action: You will take a 24 hour period and live without the letters b,d,f, j,k,q and z. These letters were chosen as during the time period they are lost in the book all communication remains relatively understandable and all vowels are still present, making your task (somewhat) easier. The only exceptions to this rule are for required class discussion (world language class). You may not remain silent all day, as this is not the intention, but are to be conscientious about what you are saying. Note how many times you “slip up” for each letter. You will use these statistics for your presentation.

Creation: You will write 3 journal entries about the experience. One before, one during, one after. The one during must obviously follow the rules of writing.

Presentation: You will share your findings and experience to the class in presentation form. You must use at least 2 visuals (the book cannot be one of them, but you can create a chart of banned letters used) that connect the audience to your argument. Discuss your experiment in detail. Presentations must be at least 2 minutes but no more than 5. Graded on visuals, connection to audience. No notes allowed. First 30 seconds none of the above letters may be used.

Task	3 points	2 points	1 point
Describe findings	Student provides detailed explanation of how their day was impacted by guidelines. Gives examples to connect audience.	Some details were given so that students have a general understanding of what occurred in the experiment.	Minimal details given so peers are only vaguely aware of what occurred.
Visuals	Presenter gives visuals that fully connect audience to how the guidelines impacted their day	Visuals are presented but not fully explained so the connection to the experiment is weaker	Minimal visuals or visuals contain text (excluding chart of banned letter use)
Voice and posture	Audience is able to maintain eye contact and hear speaker. Makes an attempt to follow Nollop’s rules	Some eye contact or some words hard to hear. Minimal attempt to follow Nollop’s rules	Hard to hear or long periods of silence or limited eye contact. Little to no attempt to follow Nollop rules.
Time	At least 2 minutes but no more than 4	Presentation is 30 seconds under or over the allotted time	Presentation is a minute under or over the allotted time