

Faculty Network/Professional Development Project
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In partnership with Professor Michael Yeong
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I worked with Professor Yeong, adopting a creative writing assignment he developed as part of teaching Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried*, and adapting it to my teaching of Melba Pattillo Beals' *Warriors Don't Cry*. Similarly, I had students rewrite scenes from the book from the perspective of a peripheral character (both books are written in the first person). Students worked in pairs or threes, combining their accounts and creating PowerPoint presentations that included text with images. I gave students time to work on this project in class, including time in the English Department Computer Lab.

Most students worked on this project diligently and with enthusiasm. One group created a hardcover book to accompany their presentation. Another group's PowerPoint included a soundtrack and moving images; they also produced a short silent film. I was impressed by the writing as well. Most students did a wonderful job of getting into Danny's head (a soldier who guards Melba) and imagining the story from his perspective. One student wrote, "The look on their faces made me feel a little touched inside. I couldn't let it show, so I looked away," and "She had an expression on her face that I could not read."

It's important to give developmental English students the chance to write creatively and in styles other than that of academic essays. Students might be surprised by what they come up with and discover they actually enjoy writing. Hopefully, these discoveries and enjoyment will transfer to their essay writing. I've never had students write their *Warriors Don't Cry* essays on just one other character's impact on Melba. Interestingly, after doing this creative assignment, two students did just that, one on Danny's impact and one on her grandmother's. At any rate, I think it's important to give all students, especially those at the developmental level, varied avenues to experience feelings of success and accomplishment. This creative writing assignment, with accompanying PowerPoint presentation, does just that.

I will definitely use this assignment again. Next time around, I'll be more vigilant about making sure students do a better job of combining their writing. In some groups of three, I noticed that the presentations mainly comprised the writing of just two of the students. I'd be happy to talk about this project at a department meeting or brown bag lunch in conjunction with other presenters.