

Twisted and Tangled

Unit 6: Genie in a Bottle – Rat in A Cage

NOTES

Activity 1: Wild Child Wordplay

Estimated Time: 60 minutes

Student Grouping: in pairs

Objectives:

- Read and discuss how a team of scientists tried to determine the effects of an “impoverished” environment on a girl raised in isolation
- Compare and contrast the effects of an impoverished environment early in life versus later in life on language acquisition
- Associate language acquisition with early theories of brain development

Standards:

NGSS	MS-LS1-3; MS-LS1-2; MS-LS1-1; MS-LS1-8
CCSS ELA/Literacy	RST.6-8.1; WHST6-8.9

Suggested Inquiry Approach:

1. Begin the activity by reviewing what the brain and nervous system does (in general) with your students.
 - ✓ Ask the students if the brain has specific “compartments” or areas associated with the control of specific functions.
2. Explain to the students that the brain develops both in utero as well as after birth. In fact, a large amount of development occurs within the first four years of life.
 - ✓ Ask the students if they have any strong memories from their first four years of life.
3. Inform the students that they will be presented with two case studies of children whose early experiences were incredibly limited in that they were reared with minimal human contact.
4. Group the students in pairs and hand each pair of students the *Case Studies* for Genie and for Oxana.
5. Instruct each student in the group to choose one case study to review. Allow for 15-20 minutes of review of case studies and then instruct the groups to discuss the studies with each other.
6. Hand out the *Hardwired Brain* student sheets to the groups and allow the pairs of students another 10 minutes to work through these sheets together.

Materials

Activity 1: Wild Child Wordplay

- Student Pages

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Debrief:

Debrief by reconvening as a large group to discuss the case studies as a large group, being sure to highlight the following questions:

- ✓ What are the similarities and differences between these experiences?
 - ✓ How did each girl do with language acquisition after years of rehabilitation?
 - ✓ Considering early theories of brain development (and the evidence included in the Hardwired Brain sheets), why are there differences in language acquisition between Genie and Oxana?
 - ✓ Considering early brain theory and evidence, do you think there is any hope for complete recovery of language? Explain!
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- ✓ *Approximately 10-15 minutes should be allowed for discussion. Complete discussion should be aided by reviewing questions and activities included with both the case studies as well as the Hardwired Brain student sheets.*

Possible Extensions:

- As an optional extension, you may choose to show the whole documentary or some clips from the video or DVD provided: *The Secret of the Wild Child*. The following links regarding Oxana and other feral children are also useful as extensions if technology is available: (be sure to review these links prior to use!)
 - <http://keepinitrealevanston.wordpress.com/2013/06/23/meet-oxana-malaya-the-dog-girl/>
 - <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/tvandradio/3653890/Cry-of-an-enfant-sauvage.html>
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3h-GhHCB07I>
- For another extension, you may choose to explore the concept of feral children in popular literature in film. Examples include Mowgli as presented in *The Jungle Book*, or Tarzan, as well as Remus and Romulus in mythology.