



The Fat Boy Chronicles

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Discovering Change

*Your work in this unit can form a foundation for developing and discovering change within yourself and others. Using the novel **The Fat Boy Chronicles** as a central source and springboard, you will answer the BIG questions: What affects change?; How can I become the person I want to be?; How can I create positive change in others and in the world?*

There may not be a Jimmy Winterpock, the central character, at your school (though that is doubtful), there is most definitely someone who is a target, someone who everyone seems to “pick on,” and gossip about. Whether you are that person who is harassed, the person who targets others, or the person who stands on the sidelines and watches, “walk in Jimmy’s shoes” by reading the novel and working through this unit; it might just bring about “change” in your own life and assist you in lending a hand to others.

Answer a few questions before you start this novel and unit. Write your question and then the answers on a separate sheet.

- What can you do well?
- What do you want to do well?
- What makes you mad?
- What do you worry about?
- What changes would you like to create in yourself?
- What changes would you like to see in others?
- What goals do you have?
- What world changes would you like to contribute to?

Front-loading Vocabulary

Task

A. In order to have a successful experience reading this novel, research these terms and find a synonym or short phrase, the part of speech, and use them aloud in a few sentences with a friend.

1. p. 1 chronicles
2. p. 6 cliché
3. p. 8 ruining
4. p. 9 scammer
5. p. 9 muse
6. pp. 11, 92 smirked
7. p. 16 ruthless
8. p. 19 ritual
9. p. 25 panorama
10. p. 26 autopsy
11. p. 32 contaminated
12. p. 33 reluctant
13. p. 53 insignificant
14. p. 61 statutory
15. p. 62 ironic
16. p. 76 resent
17. p. 85 aroma
18. p. 96 obesity
19. p. 100 pandemonium
20. p. 100 pithing
21. p. 101 coronary
22. p. 103 warmongers
23. p. 122 tirades
24. p. 123 voracious
25. p. 123 ascetic
26. p. 176 manipulative
27. p. 178 perpetual
28. p. 179 confronted
29. p. 179 scandalmongers
30. p. 206 sheepish
31. p. 215 permissive

B. Choose ten to twelve words that you want to remember and use in your own writing. Create a few sentences using these words (record on a separate sheet of paper), remember to think about the part of speech it is from when you use it. If you change the form of the word, make sure you think about which part of speech it is from as well.

Journaling Can Be Cathartic

*The word cathartic has its origins in Latin and Greek and was originally used in medicine to mean purge, purify, or cleanse. In writing it can mean the same thing but also includes the idea of energize. As you read, recognize how the **The Fat Boy Chronicles** is written in first person using the journal format. Each day he records his thoughts, feelings, ideas, advice, and even some of his school assignments. Sometimes he writes "Please Don't Read This Page," and other times he writes, allowing his English teacher to read "his stories." It may be an English assignment but Jimmy experiences a catharsis, because he dives in and gives 100% effort.*

Task

Create your own journal using a composition or spiral notebook. Start by writing at least four days a week. Record the date and share whether your instructor should read the entry or not, similar to Jimmy's entries. Record your own thoughts, feelings, ideas, and advice about anything. Set aside at least fifteen minutes to think, reflect, and write. Writing is a process; it's okay if it's hard at first. This is an excerpt of Jimmy's first write:

"Tuesday, 8-15

Hey, Mrs. Pope. I'm the diet-challenged kid who sits in the last seat by the door. I'm probably bigger now than I was this morning because your class is right after lunch and homeroom; I stay in the back so you don't have to constantly hear, 'We can't see around Jimmy!' Just trying to help out. Besides, you can see a lot back here in the cheap seats. Like how nobody wants to do this stupid journal."

It doesn't take long before Jimmy uses the "stupid journal" to help him change his life. Try it; it may work for you, too. Hint: Jimmy's changes help change the people around him, too. That's powerful stuff, just from one little journal.

Excerpts

You will need to use excerpts from the novel to help you answer questions and complete tasks. Excerpts are direct quotes from a novel or other text source. When you want to pull out a quote you have to use quotation marks. Sometimes you may want to use an ellipsis (...) so you can include only the section of the quote that best answers the question. The page number and person speaking are also preferred in excerpts.

Task

Answer the following questions by using excerpts (direct quotes) and remember to use the correct punctuation (," ".) Use the examples below or on the previous page to help.

Example One:

Q: How many times a week does Jimmy think the class will write in the journal?

A: Jimmy states on page 7, "Like any of us are going to write more than three times a week."

Example Two:

Question: What does Jimmy think about some of the teacher's topics?

Jimmy thinks, "No offense, but some of the topics you suggested are cheesy..."

Q: What does Jimmy suggest English teachers have students write?

A: _____

Q: Does Jimmy use "bad language"?

A: _____

Q: What does Jimmy believe will hold him back from writing what he wants?

A: _____

Poetry and Prose

Jimmy uses poetry to express many of the things he understands and feels. Structured poetry can help get the juices flowing, while some people love to just dive in and create their own structure. Either way, poetry continues the catharsis of energizing us toward change.

Task

Complete either of the structured poems, I AM or I don't understand..., or if you like, try both. Be prepared to read your poem in a small group.

Title - I AM...

First stanza:

I am... 2 special characteristics that you have
I wonder...something you are curious about
I hear...an imaginary sound
I see...an imaginary sight
I want...an actual desire
I am...repeat the first line

Second stanza:

I pretend...something you actually pretend to do
I feel...a feeling about something imaginary
I touch...an imaginary touch
I worry...something that really bothers you
I cry...something that makes you very sad
I am...repeat the first line of the poem

Third stanza

I understand...something you know is true
I say...something you believe
I dream...something you really dream about
I try...something you really try hard at
I hope...something you hope for
I am...repeat the first line of the poem

Your Turn

I AM

I am
I wonder
I hear
I see
I want
I am

I pretend
I feel
I touch
I worry
I cry
I am

I understand
I say
I dream
I try
I hope
I am

I Don't Understand... Poetry Model

Stanza One:

Lines 1-4 Begin the poem with "I don't understand..." List three things you do not understand about the world or people.

Lines 5-9 Write "But most of all..." Name the four things you do not understand most of all.

Stanza Two:

Lines 10-15 Write "What I understand is..." List five things you do understand.

Stanza Three:

Lines 16-17 Write "What I understand most of all is..." Name the one thing you understand most clearly.

Your turn:

I don't understand...

Why

how

why

But most of all...

why

where

how

why

What I understand most is...

why

where

why

how

why

What I understand most of all is...

Task

Jimmy writes two strong and effective Free Verse poems in his journal. The first poem, "Drugs", p. 150, is powerful because he used the poetry technique called "economy of words." He used only the words that would help him express his ideas in the poem. Using this technique, he helps the reader stay focused on the poem's theme, and demonstrates the use of one or two sophisticated vocabulary words. Because poems have lines and not sentences there are very few small words that are usually used in sentencing such as: the, is, they, it, etc. Practice this poetry technique using the unit's theme of Change.

Example:

The ying and yang
of Change

You try:

i love change;
seasons
ice cream flavors
colors

i hate change;
divorce
separation
death

change???

In the second poem, pages 152 and 153, about Jimmy's grandmother's Alzheimer's, he used the poetry technique of repetition. Choose your own theme or one from the list to create your own poem using repetition.

Theme List:

courage
war
peace
hope
conflict
relationships
independence
honesty
discovery
identity
friendship
family

Your Repetition Poem

Junk Food vs. Fresh Foods

Field trips are fun but you don't have to visit museums to learn. Go on a field trip to the grocery store. You may be surprised by what you find.

Task

Select your favorite for each junk food item and record the brand of the item below; its name, the price, and the fat, sugar, and sodium information **per serving**. You will find the information for the junk food item on the shelf's scanning label and on the back or bottom of the item.

Junk food items – Choose your favorite for each

Item	Price	Fat	Sugar	Sodium
Potato Chips				
Soda				
Candy Bar				
Cookies				
Ice Cream				
Snack Cakes				
Doughnuts				
Sport Drinks				

Fruits and Vegetables

It is a bit more difficult to determine the price of fruit and vegetable serving sizes as they are usually sold by the bunch or pound. You will have to do some estimating and determine how much of the serving size is in the amount sold.

Example One:

You can weigh a banana to determine its price using the scales in the produce section of the store. If a pound of bananas costs 55¢ and one banana (one serving) weighs .5 lb then the banana costs about 28¢ (when dealing with money you always round up).

Example Two:

If a bunch of broccoli costs 98¢ and two stalks (a serving) weigh 1/3 lb, then the cost of the broccoli is about 33¢.

You might get lucky; some stores have serving size prices listed near where the fruit is sold. If they do not, you could ask the produce manager— he might have the information for you in a binder or booklet.

Task

Record the cost per serving for four vegetables and four fruits you might eat.

Vegetable	Cost per serving
1	
2	
3	
4	

Fruits	Cost per serving
1	
2	
3	
4	

Go to www.producepedia.com

Record the vegetable and fruit in the item column, then price per serving size, fat, sugar, and sodium information **per serving** for each item.

Fruits and Vegetables

Item	Price per Serving	Fat	Sugar	Sodium

Task

Explain which food type, in general, is less expensive.

Explain which food type has more fat; include which type of fat.

Explain which food type has more sugar.

Explain which food type has more sodium; include the daily percentage.

Which should you eat?

Explain how this information will or will not change any of your eating choices.

Task

Read this summarized press release from 2008.

Public release date: 27-Oct-2008

Contact: John Easton

[University of Chicago Medical Center](#)

The researchers used two national databases, one extending back to 1994, to assess trends in diabetes treatment. They found that the number of Americans diagnosed with diabetes rose steadily from 10 million in 1994, to 14 million in 2000, to 19 million in 2007.

This rapid growth reflects trends in American eating habits and behavior, the authors note, since the risk of developing type 2 diabetes increases with age, obesity, and physical inactivity. "Part of the increase is due to an increasingly sedentary lifestyle and increasing caloric intake," said Stafford.

At the same time, the average number of medications per patient has increased from 1.06 medications per patient in 1994 to 1.45 medications per patient in 2007. In 1994, 82 percent of patients were prescribed only one drug; in 2007, only 47 percent were.

Meanwhile, the average price of a diabetes drug prescription increased from \$56 in 2001 to \$76 in 2007, due in large part to the rapid uptake of newly available oral medications, increasingly prescribed as alternatives to injectable insulin.

In 2007, for example, new drugs such as sitagliptin (brand name Januvia, \$160 per average prescription) and exenatide (Byetta, \$202) made up eight percent and four percent, respectively, of all physician office visits where a diabetes drug was prescribed. These drugs cost eight to 11 times more than older, generic drugs such as metformin or glypizide.

Although insulin use declined, the price per insulin prescription increased as new and pricier preparations of long-acting and ultrashort-acting insulins and their combinations gained popularity.

This diffusion of new therapies demonstrates the successful translation of research from bench to bedside, the author's note. But they add that this study documents the rapid uptake of newer and more expensive drugs whose long-term safety and cost-effectiveness in broader populations is not known. "Without such long-term data," said Alexander, "we cannot be certain if the widespread use of the costlier drugs is balanced by sufficient improvements in health."

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, and the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute funded the study. Additional authors include Rachael Moloney of the University of Chicago and Niraj Seghal, now at the University of California at San Francisco.

Fitness, Cheap!

Now that you know a little bit more about the negative effects of what goes into your body, take a look at what types of exercise we need to keep it fit and healthy. Do a search for the "effects of walking." You will find many helpful sites.

Task

Make a list of twelve benefits from walking, jogging, or running.

<hr/>	<hr/>

Task

What other types of exercise and activities can we do with little or no money? Pair up with a partner and see how many ideas you can record. Think under \$10.00.

<hr/>	<hr/>

Getting to Know Yourself and Others

Sometimes all it takes is a little knowledge and civility to get to know and understand one another. Take some time to get to know someone you don't normally spend time with; it might change the way you think about others.

Task

Pair up with someone you don't normally spend time with. Together, develop twelve questions you will ask each other during an interview session. Discuss which questions could be answered without making yourselves feel uncomfortable but, at the same time, will help each of you get to know one another. Make sure questions are not Yes and No.

Example:

Q. What do you do after school?

Q. What is your family like?

Q1 _____

Q2 _____

Q3 _____

Q4 _____

Q5 _____

Q6 _____

Q7 _____

Q8 _____

Q9 _____

Q10 _____

Q11 _____

Q12 _____

Task

Interview your partner and record the information below.

A1 _____

A2 _____

A3 _____

A4 _____

A5 _____

A6 _____

A7 _____

A8 _____

A9 _____

A10 _____

A11 _____

A12 _____

Task

Develop a statement that you could use to introduce your partner. It should be between 45 and 90 seconds long. After it is written, practice, and be ready to share with a small group.

Write it here:

Personal Change

Hopefully you learned something new about yourself as well as your partner. Sometimes when we have to answer questions about ourselves we begin to think more about who we are. Jimmy's mother states, "...she said it's[bullying] all about people judging others but never themselves." Use the poem to help you look at yourself in a new way. This may be a bit difficult, but you are up to the challenge!

Task

Read through the following classic poem by Strickland Gilliland a few times, then answer the questions.

WATCH YOURSELF GO BY

1 JUST STAND ASIDE and watch yourself go by;

Think of yourself as "he" instead of "I".

Note, closely as in other men you note,

The bag-kneed trousers and the seedy coat.

Pick flaws, find fault, forget the man is you,

And try to make your estimate ring true.

Confront yourself and look you in the eye—

JUST STAND ASIDE and watch yourself go by.

9 Interpret all your motives just as though

You looked on one whose aims you did not know.

Let undisguised contempt surge through you when

You see you shirk, O commonest of men!

Despise your cowardice, condemn whate'er

You note a falseness in you anywhere.

Defend not one defect that shames your eye—

JUST STAND ASIDE and watch yourself go by.

17 AND THEN, with eyes unveiled to what you loathe,

To sins that with sweet charity you'd clothe,

Back to your self-walled tenement you'll go

With tolerance for all who dwell below.

The fault of others then will dwarf and shrink,

Love's chain grow stronger by one mighty link,

When you, with "he" as substitute for "I,"

Have stood aside and WATCHED YOURSELF GO BY.

Task

Work with a partner or trio to answer the following questions.

What modern concept does the "bag-kneed trousers and seedy coat" refer to?

What is the meaning of lines 11 and 12? _____

How can you "stand aside and watch yourself go by"? _____

What is meant by the metaphor "self-walled tenement"? _____

Answer the following questions on your own:

Which qualities do your parents and/or teachers praise? _____

What do others say about you? _____

What would you like people to say about you? _____

What changes are you willing to make to become the person you want to be?

Call for Action: Bullying

In this novel Jimmy is terrorized by bullies and bystanders. Bullying is a dangerous choice that can lead to death. Review the following sites and other sources to learn more about bullying and its effects, especially look for information about the power that bystanders can have if they work together.

Task

Review the KQHL chart before you begin your research.

KQHL Chart			
K What do you know?	Q What questions do I need to answer?	H How can we find the answer?	L What have we learned? How did we learn it?

K -What do you **K**now?

L – What did we Learn and How did we Learn it?

Dramatic Literature and Role Playing

Now that you are more informed, use this research to write a skit. Sometimes people learn better when you show them instead of tell them.

Task

Write a skit using the novel and your bullying research information.

Include:

At least two characters but no more than five.

Three scenes. Set each scene; describe with some detail the time and place ().

Use colons (:) to show who is speaking.

Develop at least three scenes.

Example:

Scene One: The beginning

(In the school cafeteria, it is noisy and crowded; most people are through eating, waiting to go outside.)

Joseph: Aren't you done eating yet? Are you going to eat the entire school?

Thomas: Hey, leave her alone.

Carla: It takes so long because I eat a bunch of small things. I don't just scarf down a hamburger and fries and then suck down three chocolate milks.

La Wanda: Joseph, lay off Carla. You know you're killing yourself with all that crap you eat? Go outside if you're done.

Joseph (exits) Yeah, yeah. I'm leaving.

Carla: Thanks, you guys!

Task

Record a few ideas for a script that incorporates your notes and the human experience. Work with a small team to create the skit on Word or on your own paper. Finally, record a movie, acting out the script. Be prepared to show it to one other small group.

Glogster - Bullying Mural/Posters Online

Now you have the opportunity to create positive change for others across the world. Work with a partner or in a trio so that you can combine your research. Use the facts, pictures, music, and other images to create an online mural/poster representing the affects and effects, as well as the recommendations, for the eradication of bullying.

Task

Go to www.glogster.com Look for the gray area on the upper right that says **Try to Create Yours**. You can use Glogster without registering and without a fee by clicking this link. Click on the selections to add premade images, upload your own pictures and images, upload your own music or online tunes and add text. Develop an online poster sharing the negative effects of bullying, ways to cope, and most importantly, how to stop bullying. What from your research can you share with others?

With your partner or trio, draft some ideas for images, pictures, and music here:

Record any sites you used for your Glogster creation.

Discussion Questions

Answer each question completely and use excerpts (see p. 4 in this unit) from the book when needed; remember to explain your answers thoroughly!!

1. Jimmy states, "Sometimes, he [Allen] really asks for all the grief he gets." Do you think people deserve to be "picked on" and bullied?
2. Why is Paul obsessed with finding Kim's murderer?
3. Why would Jimmy say, "Maybe it's okay that he picks on me." Is Jimmy right?
4. How do you feel about food? (Food is important to Jimmy. Throughout the novel, he talks about how he enjoys family dinners, eating out, and how it relaxes him and makes him feel better when he is stressed.)
5. What do think the author thinks of P.E. classes at Jimmy's school?
6. What changed Jimmy's ideas about his own eating and health?
7. Why doesn't the principal do more to help Jimmy and Allen?
8. What is the difference between a problem and a challenge?
9. Is there a difference between being bullied by a family member and being bullied by others at school?
10. In bullying situations, who are bystanders and what type of power do they have?
11. How can adults help stop bullying?
12. What is your school and home food like? What changes would you propose?
13. Why does the bus driver smile when Jimmy finally pushes back against his bus tormentors?
14. On p. 95, Jimmy wonders why weight becomes such a big deal in middle school when it wasn't in elementary school. How would you answer him?
15. What is social isolation?
16. How does fear affect you?
17. Do you think Mrs. Pope reads the sections marked, "Please, Don't Read This Page"?

18. What does the author mean by, "If we don't control the beast, it will kill our souls"?
19. What kind of impact do Jimmy's parent's have on him?
20. What changed Spencer AND Rob's behavior toward Jimmy?
21. How is Jimmy losing the weight?
22. What types of facts did Jimmy learn when he researched obesity?
23. What are the characteristics of a good teacher; good student?
24. What does Sable say is the reason for her "cutting"?
25. What does Sable do that eventually gets her parents' attention?
26. How has Jimmy benefited from losing the weight?
27. Will Jimmy gain the weight back?
28. What does playing Romeo mean to Jimmy?
29. What did Jimmy share that he learned about himself during his speech to the youth group?
30. Whose advice do you trust enough to listen to: family, friends, classmates, teachers, coaches, doctors, pastors?
31. How does Jimmy's perspective about himself change when he becomes friends with Sable and Robb?
32. How does Jimmy and Paul's relationship compare to that of Robb or Sable?
33. Why was the "kiss" with Sable so monumental for Jimmy?
34. How did the journal in Mrs. Pope's class help Jimmy?
35. Who puts you "at the top of their list?"
36. What is the significance of the "little bald-headed kid on the third floor"?
37. How has Jimmy changed the way you look at others?

Book vs. Movie

Instructions:

The movie *The Fat Boy Chronicles* is based on the book of the same title by Diane Lang and Michael Buchanan. Use the worksheet to compare and contrast the book and the movie. First, jot down ideas about how the two versions of the story are similar. Then note the differences between the two.

Similarities

The Fat Boy Chronicles, the novel

The Fat Boy Chronicles, the movie

Differences

The Fat Boy Chronicles, the novel

The Fat Boy Chronicles, the movie

Respond to the statements and questions below. Make sure you explain your answers.

1. The part of the movie that I liked best

2. The part in the book that I liked best

3. Which do you think was better, the book or movie? Why?

4. Explain specific changes you would make to improve the book and/or movie.

Comparing the Novel to the Movie

Questions for Discussion

It's a Matter of Style:

1. As you watch the movie, pay attention to any visual images that heighten the emotions of the scene. Be prepared to share your observations.
2. Do you think the music in the movie worked with the different scenes? What songs did you like best and why?
3. Do you think the people who made the movie did a good job of portraying the novel? Why or why not?
4. What special effects did the director use to portray his unique take on the novel?
5. Every good movie has a "dark" moment where the main character thinks all hope is lost. This moment is later followed by a time in which the main character feels up to the challenge. Identify those moments in the movie.
6. What is the scene in the movie that moves Jimmy from his "normal" world into one of discovery and change?

It's All in the Script:

1. Why do you think the screenwriters left out parts of the book?
2. How is the order of the movie different from the novel? Why do you think the director changed the timing of some of the events?
3. Think about the setting of the novel. Did the setting in the movie look like you imagined it?
If not, how was it different?
4. Were there any changes in characters between the book and the movie? Why do you think the screenwriters would leave out or add a character?
5. What parts were in the book but not in the movie? Why do you think the screenwriters left out those parts?

6. Were there any parts that were in the movie but not in the book? Why do you think the screenwriters added those parts?
7. Do you think the screenwriters did a good job of portraying the novel? Why or why not?
8. What did you enjoy more, the book or the movie? Why?

Let's Get Literary:

1. Was Jimmy's voice more poignant in the novel or the movie?
2. How did the screenwriters convey the journal format of the novel in the movie?
3. List all the literary allusions used in the novel. What literary allusions did the screenwriters keep in the movie?
4. Explain the context and the meanings of the following two movie quotes. How do they define the overall message of the book and movie?
"Giving up is easy; getting back up is hard."
"I thought you were cool! That you got it! Boy, was I stupid!"
5. Did you need to read the novel in order to understand what was happening in the movie?
6. In the novel, Jimmy writes free verse. Would any of his poems be relevant to the movie?
7. Using any form, write a poem you think would be relevant to the movie.

Let's Look Further:

1. Research movies that have won Oscars for best picture over the last ten years. What common elements do you think good movies have?
2. Research teen books that have won awards. What common elements do these novels have? How would you rate *The Fat Boy Chronicles* movie and novel?

Small Group Activities:

1. Make a Venn diagram using one circle for the book and one for the movie. List the events in the movie; list the events in the novel. Discuss the differences and the effectiveness of including or excluding each of the scenes.
2. Make a list of scenes from the novel that you would have included in the movie. Where would you put them in the movie?

Large Group Activities:

1. Discuss a book that has not been made into a movie—what are the challenges? What would you need to leave out? Who would you cast for each character?
2. List all the books you can think of that have been made into movies. Write a letter to the director telling him/her what you think of his/her movie.
3. Choose a small scene from *The Fat Boy Chronicles*. Using celtx.com, write the scene in screenplay form, and then have the group act it out. Film the final result and show it to the class.
4. Create your own classroom film festival: Design posters advertising your film festival. Choose snippets of several movies that have not been extensively reviewed. Invite students from around the school to visit your film festival during lunch breaks, before school, or after school. Provide treats and bottled water. Provide review sheets and ballots for the movies shown. Have the audience review each movie snippet and then calculate the winnings. Share the results with the entire student body. Possibly have students from your class dress up as the various actors and play the part.