**Homework Assignments for Winter Break**

**A Yankee Swap!**

***Introduction:***

If you are looking for a way to keep students engaged in English language learning during your holiday break, here is an activity you can try out before the end of the semester. Students do a “Yankee Swap” to determine which homework assignment they will work on during the break. According to the rules of the Yankee Swap, participants can swap homework assignments if there’s one they prefer – so there are lots of opportunities for students to talk to each other as they navigate all the swapping. At the end of the process, everyone has a homework assignment and everyone has a copy of a chart that lists each homework assignment and the name of the person who has it. When the class starts up again in January, everyone will be accountable to everyone else.

**Preparation:**

Write the numbers 1-10 on pieces of paper; fold them so they can be drawn from a hat. Decide on 10 homework assignments and list them in the grid on the handout. I have included some sample ideas – all drawn from level 4-5 articles from the Career Pathways issue of *The Change Agent* -- which you can use or replace as you see fit. (You can make your homework assignments more fun and less reading-centric. For example: Learn how to make three shadow puppets and be prepared to teach the class. Try a new cookie recipe, and bring the cookies to class in January. Learn a poem in English and be prepared to recite it in January.) Whatever homework assignments you decide on, you’ll need to print them out in large type. Then cut them out and fold them, so they can be put in the hat and drawn by students.

***Length of Time:***

Less than an hour.

***Warm-up:***

Go around the room and share stories of different kinds of “swaps” or exchanges that students have done for the holidays, such as “Secret Santa” or picking a name from a hat. Make sure to include space for non-Christmas holidays and gift-exchanging times that happen in cultures and religions besides western/Christian.

***Pre-teach – a little vocabulary and a little history:***

Make sure students understand the words “swap” and “Yankee.” Synonyms for swap include: trade, exchange, switch. Ask students to make sentences with the word swap and keep going until everyone can use it correctly. For the word Yankee, ask students if they have heard the word. Many will have heard the term in reference to people from the U.S. Explain that in the U.S., it refers to northerners in the Civil War. The southerners were rebels or Confederates. (Some people think that the origin of the term “Yankee Swap” comes from the north and the south trading prisoners with each other during the Civil War.)

***Do the Yankee Swap:***

Hand out the directions and the chart (see the next page). *NOTE: The directions are set up for a class with 10 students. Of course, you will need to modify according to the number of students in your class.* Go through the directions carefully. This is a great opportunity to practice reading and following directions. Ask for two volunteers who feel confident in how the game works to lead the activity. During the drawing of assignments and the swapping, encourage comments and friendly suspense about whether you’ll get to keep yours or whether it will be traded. When students decide to swap, they should try out the new vocabulary they’ve learned, and say, “I want to swap [or trade or switch] with you.” The response might be, “Oh no, I don’t want to swap!” (Too bad, though. The rules are: if someone wants to swap, you have to do it.)

***Closure:***

After everyone has their homework assignment, go through the list and make sure everyone writes down a name next to each assignment. Double check that everyone feels comfortable with their assignment. If anyone is unhappy, ask if they would like to “share” with someone else. (There’s no reason why two people couldn’t do one assignment, and there’s no reason everyone shouldn’t be happy with what they got in the end.)

**HANDOUT for the Yankee Swap/Homework Assignments**

***Directions:***

Step 1: Pick a piece of paper from the hat. Each paper will have a number 1-10. This tells you who will pick first, second, third, and so on.

Step 2: The person who goes first, picks a homework assignment out of the hat and then shows it to everyone. If you are the first person to go, you just hold on to your assignment for now as there is no one to swap with yet. At the end of the game, you will have your turn to swap if you want to.

Step 3: The second person picks from the hat and shows their assignment to everyone. This person has the option of keeping the assignment or swapping it with the person who went first. This is that person’s *only* chance to swap. (Although they might lose what they have if someone else who comes later chooses to swap with them.)

Step 4: Now the third person picks an assignment from the hat and decides whether to swap with person #1 or person #2. This is their only chance to swap.

Step 5: Keep selecting and swapping until everyone has gone. At the end, the person who went first can swap with anyone else.

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| **Assignment** | **Person** |
| Listen to the audio version of “My Beautiful White Blouse” (p. 4). Practice reading it out loud. Be ready to read it out loud to the class in January. |  |
| Read “My Beautiful White Blouse” and do the first activity in the box: Write down the sequence of events that led to Hoai Do becoming a nurse. |  |
| Read “My Beautiful White Blouse” and do the third activity in the box: Write about a dream you had from childhood. |  |
| Listen to the audio version of “I was a Dentist in Syria.” Practice reading it out loud. Pick two paragraphs and be ready to read them out loud to the class in January. |  |
| Study the map on p. 33 and be ready to answer all the questions in the first activity and share the answers with your class. |  |
| Read “I Was a Dentist in Syria” and do the third activity in the box: Find out more information about Syria and bring it to the class to share. |  |
| Read “My Life in Concrete” (pp. 24-25) and be prepared to tell his story to your fellow students when you come back from break in January. |  |
| The author of “My Life in Concrete” has a digital story. Watch it here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M5ij3pFkGA8>. Notice one thing that surprised you about his story and share it with the class in January. |  |
| Listen to the audio version of “My Life in Concrete.” Pick two paragraphs and be prepared to read them out loud in January. |  |
| Read “The Feeling of Losing a Job” on p. 46. Pick one of the activities in the box and be prepared to share it with the class in January. |  |