

Beyond the Lecture

Exploring Life Lessons Through The Last Lecture

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Grade Level 12th Grade

Subject English/Language Arts

Essential Question

What practical lessons about resilience, goal-setting, and building meaningful relationships can be applied to overcome our own challenges and make better life decisions?

Summary

Themes of resilience, meaningful goal-setting, and prioritizing relationships are fundamental issues students will explore in this 5E lesson based on Randy Pausch's inspirational memoir, The Last Lecture. Students will analyze how Pausch's tone, language, sincerity, and anecdotes contribute to his perspectives on overcoming obstacles and achieving childhood dreams. Students will examine how his approach to viewing failure as a stepping stone rather than an obstacle affects achievement and personal growth. Drawing on their own life experiences, students will prepare and deliver presentations modeled after Pausch's "last lecture," conveying their understanding of his lessons and applying them to real-life decision-making, ultimately reflecting on the legacy of a life well-lived.

Snapshot

Engage

Students use ABC Graffiti to brainstorm words relating to life's lessons, reflecting on the most valuable lessons learned with an elbow partner, and creating chat station posters inferring information about *The Last Lecture*.

Explore

Students use the strategy Novel in a Day to identify the theme, tone, and author's perspective of *The Last Lecture,* analyzing perspectives and values, explaining in an Inverted Pyramid, and generating discussions about their analyses.

Explain

Students interpret and synthesize the phenomenon of the perception of failure, generating a Driving Board Question, and following up with a 3-2-1.

Extend

Students construct questions using Say Something sentence starters and design a Cognitive Comic about one key theme from the text.

Evaluate

Using Mirror, Microscope, and Binoculars, students reflect on their experiences in life and high school and compose a video essay using VlogIt.

Standards

Oklahoma Academic Standards: English Language Arts (Grade 12)

12.1.S.3: Conduct formal and informal presentations in a variety of contexts supporting their message with evidence and using verbal and nonverbal cues.
12.3.R.1: Analyze the extent to which historical, cultural, and/or global perspectives affect authors' stylistic choices in grade-level literary and informational texts.
12.3.R.2: Evaluate authors' perspectives and explain how those perspectives contribute to the meanings of texts.
12.4.W.2: Select language to create a specific effect in writing according to purpose and audience.

Attachments

- Chat Stations Cards–Beyond the Lecture.docx
- Chat Stations Cards–Beyond the Lecture.pdf
- Chat Stations Graphic Organizer–Beyond the Lecture.docx
- Chat Stations Graphic Organizer–Beyond the Lecture.pdf
- Cognitive Comics–Beyond the Lecture.docx
- Cognitive Comics–Beyond the Lecture.pdf
- Inverted Pyramid Discussion Questions–Beyond the Lecture.docx
- Inverted Pyramid Discussion Questions–Beyond the Lecture.pdf
- Lesson Slides–Beyond the Lecture.pptx
- Mirror, Binoculars, Microscope–Beyond the Lecture.docx
- Mirror, Binoculars, Microscope–Beyond the Lecture.pdf
- Say Something–Beyond the Lecture.docx
- Say Something–Beyond the Lecture.pdf
- The Last Lecture Summary–Beyond the Lecture.pptx
- Video Reflection Rubric–Beyond the Lecture.docx
- Video Reflection Rubric–Beyond the Lecture.pdf

Materials

- *The Last Lecture* by Randy Pausch
- Chat Stations [Graphic Organizer] Handout (attached; one per student)
- Chat Station Cards (attached; one card per station)
- Cognitive Comics (attached, one per student)
- Say Something Handout (attached; one per student)
- Video Essay Rubric (attached; one per student)
- Mirror, Microscope, Binoculars graphic organizer (attached, one per student)
- Inverted Pyramid Discussion Questions (attached; one per pair of students)
- Chart Paper
- Flip chart markers
- Sticky notes

45 minutes

Engage

Teacher's Note: Lesson Preparation

Prep ABC Graffiti charts to be placed at stations around the classroom or use one of the attached templates on the ABC Graffiti strategy.

Introduce the lesson's title by displaying **slide 2** from the attached **Lesson Slides**.

Share the lesson's essential question and learning objectives on **slides 3 and 4** to the extent you feel necessary.

Display **slide 5** and explain to students that they will complete an ABC Graffiti activity related to life's lessons. Have students form groups of 2-3 and move to their assigned stations; give each group a uniquely colored marker. Instruct the groups to choose a scribe to carry the marker to each poster and coordinate the writing duties.

Explain to students that they will write down words for as many letters as possible in the time provided using their prior knowledge of "Lessons Learned in Life." Use the examples from the slide or other examples to clarify the activity for students. Announce that students have three minutes, set the timer (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iISP02KPau0) and have them begin. If you believe students may need more or less time, you can find additional timers on the K20 Center's YouTube Channel.

When the timer ends, move to **slide 6** and have students rotate to the next station. Remind them to pick up where the previous group left off, fill in blank spaces, and make corrections where necessary. Restart the timer, noting that students only have **two** minutes in each rotation (https://youtu.be/HcEEAnwOt2c?si=y_VO-BnzYHjUskZG).

Optional extension: When the timer ends, display **slide 7** and inform students they can now use an outside resource to generate new ideas for this **three-minute round**. Start the three-minute timer and continue in this fashion, rotating to new stations until students have exhausted their ideas.

When the timer ends, display **slide 8.** For the final round, instruct the groups to return to their original poster and construct a Six Word Memoir, a summary statement that synthesizes the poster's information. Have students return to their seats. Conduct a class discussion in which groups share their summary statements. (Ex. Fail, learn, grow—repeat without fear.)

50 minutes

Explore 1

Teacher's Note: Preparation

Prior to teaching the lesson, print the attached **Chat Station Cards** and place them intermittently around the room. To reduce group sizes, make extra copies and divide students into pairs or trios at each station. Alternatively, duplicate stations can be set up to reduce the number of students at each station. The following questions are listed on the Chat Station Cards:

- What do you think the book is about?
- Why do you think the author chose to give a "last lecture?"
- What might he want to share in his "last lecture?"
- What do you think a person would want to share in their 'last lecture' if they knew it was their final opportunity to speak to an audience?
- How do you measure success in life?

Embedded video

https://youtube.com/watch?v=TbeCfNWr9Ls

Share the preview video for *The Last Lecture* on **Slide 9** with students. Explain that it explores the author's reflections on his life and the lessons he wants to share.

Display **slide 10** and share the instructional strategy Chat Stations with students. Place students into groups of three to four. Students will have 2 minutes at each poster to jot down key findings/observations from their group discussions. Point out the posted chat stations around the room and have students visit each station as a group. At each station, they should discuss the material on the posters to predict and justify the answers to the poster questions. Ask them to record this information in their **Chat Station Graphic Organizer** (attached).

Once students have completed the poster circuit, bring them together as a whole group to share what they discussed in their small groups.

250 minutes

Explore 2

Teacher's Note: Preparation

Create a short link and QR Code for the location of the "Last Lecture Summary" slide deck and paste it into **slide 13**. With a text this size, the Novel in a Day strategy takes about four days to complete. Students need time to read, discuss, and construct their summary slides.

In preparation for this lesson, students may read Chapter 1 of the book as homework.

Explain to students that they will use the novel *The Last Lecture* to analyze a character's actions, dialogue, and relationships. They will learn to recognize and explain key themes, tone, and the author's perspective. Display **slide 11** and share the instructional strategy Novel in a Day with students. Once students understand the strategy's focus, you will model how to build a summary slide for a student-edited slide deck summarizing the novel.

Open "**The Last Lecture Summary**" slide deck (a second slide deck, attached). Spend a few minutes reviewing **slides 1-4** of the "The Last Lecture Summary" slides. When you have completed the review, display **slide 5** to review the expectations for the activity. Read Chapter 1 of the book together and then elicit information in a whole-class discussion. Use student observations to build a summary with the class on **slide 7**, modeling how they should complete their assigned chapter slides. Together, identify the theme, tone, and author's perspective for chapter 1. (Unhide **slide 6**, a model summary slide, if you choose not to complete a summary together with your class.)

When you have finished summarizing Chapter 1, return to the main slide deck and display **slide 12**. Divide the class into six groups. Each group will be responsible for one set of ten chapters.

- **The Last Lecture, Chapters 2-11**
- **The Last Lecture, Chapters 12-21**
- **The Last Lecture, Chapters 22-31**
- **The Last Lecture, Chapters 32-41**
- **The Last Lecture, Chapters 42-51**
- **The Last Lecture, Chapters 52-61**

Instruct students to Jigsaw the chapters within their groups, and then each student will craft a summary of the part they individually read. In their groups, they will create a combined summary of all the chapters assigned to their group.

Go to **slide 13** and have students type in your shortened URL address or scan the QR code to access the **"The Last Lecture Summary"** slide deck. Once students have accessed the activity and the "sample" slide, minimize the Lesson Slides and pull up the "The Last Lecture Activity" slides. Instruct them to find their chapter slides and add summaries to the linked "The Last Lecture Summary" slide deck. Ask each group to share their summaries in chapter order as a class.

Allow students time to read (with a text this long, suggest about two or three days to read and create their slides) and write their summaries and reflections. Have students keep summaries and reflections concise while focusing on identifying the main idea and highlighting key lessons or events in each chapter. Reflections may include any personal connections prompted by their reading. You may have students write their reflections on a separate piece of paper to be handed in, especially if you would like students to write honestly and confidently. Display **slide 14.** Have groups present their summaries to the class and follow up with discussion as necessary.

Teacher's Note: Conducting the Inverted Pyramid

1. Print and cut apart the Inverted Pyramid Discussion Questions handout. There are two handouts printed on the page.
2. Have students pair up and pass out the Inverted Pyramid Discussion Questions handout.
3. Allow time to analyze the text together and answer the discussion questions. Set a 20-minute timer and tell students to discuss and answer the questions.
4. Monitor progress and, when ready, have pairs work with another student pair to form a group of four. Set a timer for 15 minutes and allow the group of four to share what they discussed.

- This repetition of ideas allows students to determine what is significant and pushes them to expand their perspective.

4. Set a timer for 10 minutes, and these groups of four then partner with another small group and share their thoughts (optional).
5. After sharing in small groups (multiple times in some cases), groups come together for a whole-class discussion.

Display **slide 15** and briefly explain the Inverted Pyramid strategy. Distribute the **Inverted Pyramid handout** to each partner group. (Alternatively, you may unhide **slide 16** if you choose not to print the Inverted Pyramid handout.) Ask pairs to complete the questions on the handout. Display **slide 17** and invite pairs to partner with another pair to share their thoughts about key elements of the novel. Display **slide 18.** Groups of four should join to create a group of eight and continue to discuss the answers to the discussion questions. Continue until the whole class is one group.

End the activity by facilitating a whole-class discussion about what students learned regarding themes, tone, and the author's perspective.

75 minutes

Explain

Teacher's Note: Conducting the Driving Question Board

Instructor's Note: Driving Question Board

1. Present students with a thought-provoking question.
2. As students ponder their initial responses and ideas, give them markers, sticky notes, index cards, and/or scrap pieces of paper.
3. Inform students they will analyze the question by adding their answers to a Driving Question Board. Whether this is a section of your whiteboard, a large poster, or a bulletin board, make sure it is visible to students as they develop their understanding.
4. Have each student write down their questions or personal experiences that are relevant to the phenomenon of fear of failure. When they are done, ask each student to add their contributions to the board.
5. Then, have a whole-class discussion about everyone's questions and answers. Ask students to share their ideas for grouping the questions based on similarities.

See a demonstration video at Demonstration Video.

Display **slide 19.** Briefly introduce this video on the themes of rejection and failure. Begin at 12:34 and watch until the end (15:16). https://www.ted.com/talks/jia_jiang_what_i_learned_from_100_days_of_rejection

Display **slide 20.** Elicit student input on a definition of "grit." Compare their definition to the presenter: "We need to measure whether we've been successful, and we have to be willing to fail, to be wrong, to start over again with lessons learned." Introduce the video and watch 03:19-05:47.
https://www.ted.com/talks/angela_lee_duckworth_grit_the_power_of_passion_and_perseverance

Explain the Driving Question Board strategy. Describe the strategy in the context of the questions, "Why are we so afraid of failure?" and "Why does failure have such deep negative perceptions [in our culture]?" Demonstrate the process for students. Continue to **slide 21** to ask the questions,

- What would you do if you weren't afraid to fail?
- How might your life change if you embraced failure as a stepping stone rather than an obstacle?

Have students ponder their initial responses and ideas, writing their questions and observations on stickies that can be placed on a Driving Question Board. Ask students to add their contributions to the board and conduct a whole-class discussion focusing, in part, on grouping their observations and questions according to similarities, then begin exploring the groups in discussion.

Display **slide 22.** After allowing adequate discussions, have the students follow up this activity with a summary using the 3-2-1 strategy. As an exit ticket, students will discuss 3 things they have learned, 2 questions they still have, and 1 thing they found interesting. The responses can be shared aloud or turned in on paper.

50 minutes

Extend

Pass out copies of the Say Something handout and move to **slide 23** to support your explanation. Have students find an Elbow Partner to develop a probing question or statement based on the reading using every category of sentence starters from their **Say Something** handout. For a few minutes, pairs can write their questions or statements on sticky notes. Then, ask them to pose their questions to the class to generate responses. Guide the discussion as needed.

Move to **slide 24** and instruct students to identify:

- The main themes or messages the author, Randy Pausch, is trying to convey;
- Specific examples or stories the author uses to illustrate these themes;
- How the author's perspective and writing style contribute to the meaning of the text;
- Pausch's use of specific language, tone, and narrative techniques and how they impact the reader's understanding and interpretation of the life lessons;
- The perspectives or experiences Pausch draws upon shape how he presents these lessons.

Record student observations on the board or in a slide for later reference.

Display **slide 25** to introduce the Cognitive Comic strategy, divide students into small groups of 4-5, and pass out the **Cognitive Comics** template. Each group will select one key theme from "The Last Lecture" (e.g., overcoming obstacles, the importance of childhood dreams, etc.) to explore further. Groups will create a visual representation of their theme using the Cognitive Comic strategy, incorporating quotes from the book and personal reflections. Each group will present their chart to the class, explaining their chosen theme and how it relates to the overall message of "The Last Lecture." Encourage students to connect their themes to their own dreams and experiences.

Teacher's Note: Key Themes in *The Last Lecture*

Some key themes in *The Last Lecture* that students should report are achieving childhood dreams, enabling others' dreams, overcoming obstacles, the power of gratitude, living with integrity, making the most of limited time, and the importance of fun.

90 minutes

Evaluate

Display **slide 27** and introduce the Mirror, Microscope, Binoculars strategy to students. Indicate that the Mirror refers to internal reflection, that the Microscope is a close inspection of learning, and that the Binoculars are a global, "big-picture" reflection. Ask students to answer the three prompts on **slide 27** on notebook paper and turn in their responses before leaving the class. Review students' responses to assess their understanding of the lesson.

Reflection Questions:

Mirror: (internal reflection): What have I learned about myself by reading this book?

Microscope: (close inspection): What lessons required closer inspection?

Binoculars: (global reflection): What value does *The Last Lecture* have for the world?

Display **slide 28.** Students will create a video essay using VlogIt, "Their Last Lecture," about their time in high school. The essay must include the following:

Parts of the Lecture:

- Attention getter and thesis statement: What have you done or thought that might get a reader's attention?
- Reflection on the past: What details about your life would you like to share?
- Advice to underclassmen at their high school: What is your lasting legacy?
- Looking forward: What do you want to do in the next 5, 10, 20+ years?

The students will be given a copy of the rubric before creating their video essay to ensure they complete all the required components.

Teacher's Note:

Encourage students to practice and refine their presentations several times before the final delivery. The goal is to create a meaningful, personal reflection that inspires and connects with the audience.

Display **slides 29-30.** Discuss quotes and how they tie into the lesson.

Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts. —Winston Churchill

So, even if there are failures, it brings experience. Experience is what you get when you didn't get what you wanted. And experience is often the most valuable thing you have to offer. —Randy Pausch

Standards

- 12.1.S.3 Students will conduct formal and informal presentations in a variety of contexts supporting their message with evidence and using verbal and nonverbal cues.
- 12.3.R.1 Students will analyze the extent to which historical, cultural, and/or global perspectives affect authors' stylistic choices in grade-level literary and informational texts.
- 12.3.R.2 Students will evaluate authors' perspectives and explain how those perspectives contribute to the meanings of texts.
- 12.4.W.2 Students will select language to create a specific effect in writing according to purpose and audience.

Resources

- Duckworth, A. (2013). *Grit: The power of passion and perseverance.* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.ted.com/talks/angela_lee_duckworth_grit_the_power_of_passion_and_perseverance
- Jiang, J. (2015) *What I learned from 100 days of rejection.* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.ted.com/talks/jia_jiang_what_i_learned_from_100_days_of_rejection
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- K20 Center. (2021). *K20 Center 2-minute timer* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HcEEAnwOt2c
- Nicholson, K. (2012, Mar. 28) *The last lecture movie trailer.* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TbeCfNWr9Ls&t=75