



# Pre-texts Project

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# Overview

- Project description
- Analysis of the process, reflexions & pieces of evidence
- Conclusion



# Project description



## Group

6th grade elementary students of around 12 years old. Two groups of 20 girls each.



## Book

The book's called *Finally*, from the *Willow Falls* series by Wendy Mass. We read around two chapters each session.

DATE	ICEBREAKER	ACTIVITY
Feb 13th	Nicole & Re N	Vale & Diane
Feb 20th	Iss & Pau	Loren & Elid
Feb 27th	Dani & Re G	Jime B & M
March 19th	Maria Pau & Maria B	MAnicol & R
March 26th	Fan & Lu A	Julia & Jime

## Lenght

The project started on February 6th, and has taken place every Tuesday, from 7:30 to 9:30. It is still a work in progress.



## Resources

We used only physical materials, but computers and ipads were allowed to present their branches.

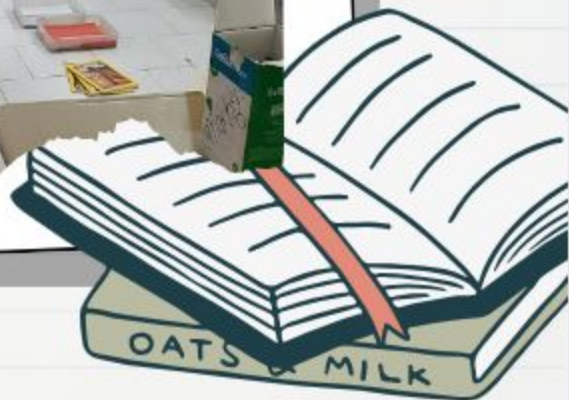



# Analysis of the process

## First session

The beginning of the process was very natural: After a fast icebreaker (something that we ordinarily do), students quickly understood that they would need to work manually while listening to the book.

To finish their first product, a coverage and a backpage, they took much more time than I expected.





The session was a two hour plan, but they kept asking for more time. We finished in around four hours (two days work). Should I have stopped them?

Maybe, but the results were quite amazing. It helped me to understand what we were really doing: **art**.

It was a whole change of mentality, for both, them and me. They weren't just *producing*... they were **creating**.

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The hardest part of the first session was to ask the text a question. Most of them were to the author, not the text. Still, the variety of answers was fun and engaging.

Contrary to my belief, the easiest part of the process was to answer the final question: **what did we do today?**

Their answers were all genuine, coming to prove they adapted almost immediately to the Pretexts process.




The first session, that  
took almost four hours.







## Planning the next sessions



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They were all eager to do it again.

In pairs, they were assigned one session, and were given some time to think of what activity they could organize.

I sat with each team to hear their ideas and make a list of the needed materials.

Some of them knew exactly what to do, and some had no clue. I decided not to intervene, since I tend to be very overbearing, and part of the idea is to become an *ignorant teacher*.



## Following sessions

The next Tuesday was Pretexts day again. We started with the *branches*. Of course, half of the group had forgotten to bring them.

Something interesting happened then: the group that brought more interesting *branches* was less creative with their activities; and the second group was less participative during the branches presentation, but way more creative with the activity.





At first it was difficult for them to understand the concept of *branches*.

Almost all the students brought the same things, or didn't bring anything at all.

My cordel was quite empty the first day, excepting for a smiling, stuffed, pink cow.

It is difficult to have them listen to each other, especially because it always happens that some speak too much, and some too little.

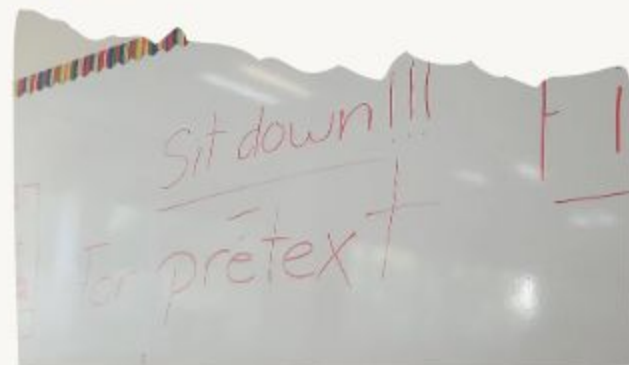
At the end, they understood that we were there to *listen to one another*: **becoming real people to others.**



Then came the icebreakers and activities: they were very engaged and excited to be the ones that organize the *Pretexts*.

It surprised me the easiness with which they conducted their class.

I think that when you give up your authority, their **leadership** naturally emerges.



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Group B's activity consisted on making a 3D model with clay. Here are some of their creations.



As I previously mentioned, group A was much more responsible and communicative than group B regarding *branches*, but their activity was way simpler.

To be completely honest, at first I was grateful that I could finish the entire process in the two hours planned for it, at least with one of the groups...the other one took their time again to finish their creations  
Were they taking me for a ride?



They got the point!

In this first activity, the organizers had us make a list of 10 things you would like to do or have when you're 15.

Then, we read the lists out loud and tried to guess who wrote them. It helped us learn a lot about each other.

It even helped us to reflect on what kind of things we wish for...





With time, the icebreakers became more and more creative, while the activities varied from team to team: some were very funny, some were a bit repetitive.

They all liked Tuesdays, of course.





Teams not preparing their activity, or having to improvise the materials they used caused some discussions. They had to come up with the solutions, since I decided not to solve the problem for them. It was good learning for both, them and me.

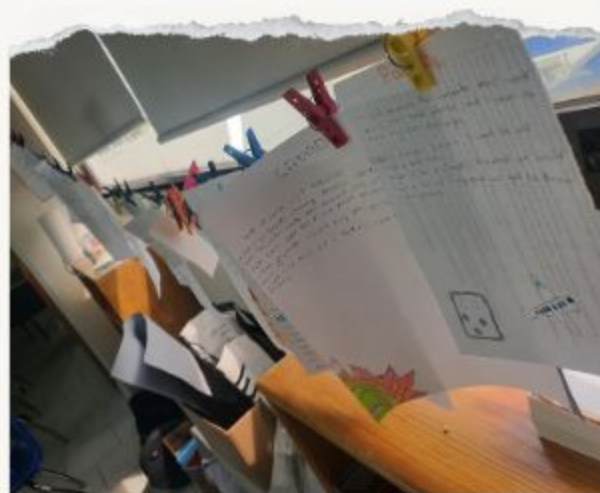
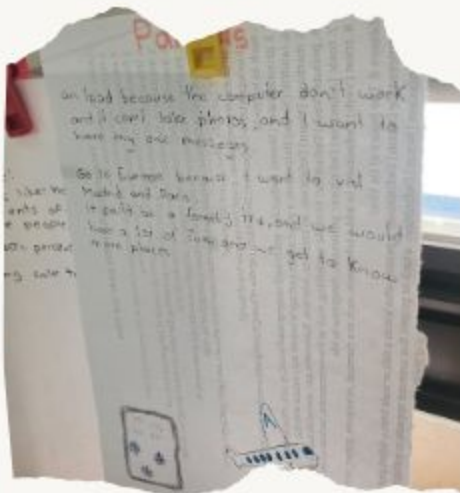


It is undeniable they all loved Tuesdays, and we were getting to know each other much better, but I must confess I was very worried about the amount of time invested on it...



But at the same time, even when the activities seemed more like a resting period, I could also notice we were learning something new; not only from the book -that at first was my main concern - but also from each other, and even from ourselves.





At the end of each session, they had to say a word or phrase that answers the question: **what did we do?**

The answers couldn't repeat, so they needed to reflect, *use their brains*, really consider what we did.

I witnessed how their creativity met reflection and critical thinking.



By the third session, I had to threaten them a bit to have them bring more *branches*, since they ran out of ideas, and weren't sharing as much as they ought to.

The results of my threatening were great! The well-thought branches were an amazing opportunity to understand their backgrounds, likes and dislikes.

This amazing activity consisted on painting a key ring with the first letter of a classmate's name.

They created beautiful works of art, maybe the best yet because they knew it was a gift.

As always, I was afraid that they weren't paying attention to the book. It was a relief to see that they were getting it even better than previous years, and were excited to know what would happen next in the story.



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The artistic activities multiplied. I am pretty sure they're indeed **infinite**, as infinite is the creativity in the human brain.



# Conclusion



I can't say we're done. My students want to organize more and more activities and icebreakers. They are very motivated with the idea of having the class in their hands.

Art has always been part of my student's lives, but I don't think they've ever seen it as a doorway to admire others. This process forces us to do so, since we all have to speak, and listen to one another.

I also didn't think it possible that the deep reading of a text could be combined with an artistic interpretation of it, and the results have indeed surprised me.

I won't say I don't fear the time invested, my eternal enemy. Yet, the pleasure that brings me to see how diverse, creative and funny these kids can be, gives me a powerful reason why I want to continue doing it.

Besides, I've always enjoyed reading, and I really think there isn't enough time to do so with my kids. This is a pretty good solution for me.

[link to the CANVA presentation](#)

# Thank's For Watching

