

NEWS BREAK

Article: British playgrounds are lessons in risk, developing some pluck

Section: MAIN, A3

Sunday's News Break selects an article from **Sunday, March 11, 2018**, of The Seattle Times print replica for an in-depth reading of the news. Read the selected article and answer the attached study questions.

You are encouraged to modify this lesson to fit the needs of your students. For example, some classrooms may be able to use this as a worksheet and others might need to ask and answer the questions in a small group or larger, class discussion.

Please be sure to preview all NIE content before using it in your classroom to ensure it is appropriate for all of your students.

Standards:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.1

- Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.2

- Determine the main idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize the text.

Objectives:

Students will read an article about British playgrounds that are bringing in some risk in their playgrounds to build resilience and grit within their students. They will discuss overprotective culture of parents and schools. They will talk the pros and cons of playgrounds with increased risk and develop their perfect playground and what it would contain.

Pre-Reading Discussion:



- What do you think the article will be about? Are there clues in the pictures? What can you infer?

Vocabulary Building:

Read this sentence, what do you think the highlighted words mean using *context clues*? A **context clue** is a word or words that are hints and refers to the sources of information outside of words that readers may use to predict the identities and meanings of unknown words.

Limited risks are increasingly cast by experts as an experience essential to childhood development, useful in building **resilience** and **grit**.

Write your guess and then look up the definition and write it below your guess. How close did you come to the correct definition?

Resilience Guess:

Resilience Definition:

Grit Guess:

Grit Definition:

Comprehension Questions:

1. ESHOEBURYNESS, England — Educators in Britain, after decades spent in a collective effort to minimize risk, are now, cautiously, getting into the business of doing what?
2. Four years ago, for instance, teachers at the Richmond Avenue Primary and Nursery School looked critically around their campus and set about, as

- one of them put it, “bringing in risk.” Out went the plastic playhouses and in came the dicey stuff. What did they bring to their playground?
3. The shift to seeing some benefit in risk, advocates say, signals the end of a decades-long drift toward what?
 4. “It’s a rubber floor, a little structure surrounded by a fence, it’s like a little _____,” she said of playgrounds in the United States. “As a grown-up, you’re sitting there on your phone, waiting for them to be done.”
 5. And society recoils every time a child is seriously hurt on a playground. Playground deaths are extremely rare, but they tap into a parent’s worst fear, and are amplified by widespread reporting. How often do playground deaths occur in Britain?
 6. Ask the teachers at the Richmond Avenue Primary School, though, and they will tell you that exposing children to limited risks now, while they are young, will help them _____.

Discussion Questions (small/large groups), Journal Prompts or Essay Questions:

- Do you generally seek out risk? Why or why not?
- Why do you think many people (and parents) are against taking risks?
- Were your parents overprotective? In what ways?
- Do you think children should be able to play in playgrounds that have some risks attached? Why or why not?
- How are (were) your playgrounds at your elementary school? Did you enjoy playing at recess in that environment?
- What would the perfect playground have in it?

“We thought, how can we bring that element of risk into your everyday environment?” said Leah Morris, who manages the early-years program at the school in Shoeburyness in southeast Britain. “We were looking at, OK, so we’ve got a sand pit, what can we add to the sand pit to make it more risky?”

Now, Morris says, “we have fires, we use knives, saws, different tools,” all used under adult supervision. Indoors, scissors abound, and so do sharp-edged tape dispensers (“they normally only cut themselves once,” she says).

Limited risks are increasingly cast by experts as an experience essential to childhood development, useful in building resilience and grit.

- Do you think increased risk-playgrounds create kids that are more resilient and have more grit? Why or why not?

Outside the Princess Diana Playground in Kensington Gardens in London, which attracts more than 1 million visitors a year, a placard informs parents

that risks have been “intentionally provided, so that your child can develop an appreciation of risk in a controlled play environment rather than taking similar risks in an uncontrolled and unregulated wider world.”

- Playground signs read that risks have been intentionally provided. What do you think about this?

As she thought through these changes, a towheaded kindergartner nearby had fashioned a catapult, stacking seven bricks on one end of a wooden plank and jumping solidly onto the other end, sending the bricks flying into the air, over the heads of his playmates.

“You’ve got to get out there and find your position in the world,” Hughes said. “If you don’t give those children those creative skills, that risk, that take a chance. If they don’t have all that risk out there when the child is 4, the adult isn’t going to do that.”

“It’s about exploring controlled risk. ... We’ve got the gorse bushes. The child will touch it and learn it is a spiky bush.”

CHRIS MORAN, MANAGER

Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park

- What is your opinion on riskier playgrounds?
- Does it help the child with creative skills and taking chances? Why or why not?
- What kind of playground would you want to play in?
- Do you think U.S. schools and city parks will ever adopt their philosophy? Why or why not?

News Break is posted to the Web on Monday. Please share this NIE News Break program with other teachers. To sign-up for the print replica for your class, please [register on-line](#) or call 206/652-6290 or toll-free 1-888/775-2655. Copyright © 2018 The Seattle Times Company

Newsbreak Answer Key: March 11, 2018

Pre-Reading Discussion:

Answers will vary

Vocabulary Building:

Resilience: The capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness: "The often remarkable resilience of so many British institutions.

Grit: Courage and resolve; strength of character: "He displayed the true grit of the navy pilot"

Comprehension Answers:

1. Providing it (risk).
2. Stacks of two-by-fours, crates and loose bricks. The schoolyard got a mud pit, a tire swing, log stumps and workbenches with hammers and saws.
3. Overprotecting children
4. Play jail
5. They occur once every three or four years in Britain.
6. Survive

Discussion Questions (small/large groups), Journal Prompts or Essay

Questions: Answers will vary