

ANNA'S CASE STUDY

SECTION 1

As a preschool student, Anna is very inquisitive and loves reading, doing math, and asking many questions. Anna understands things intuitively, and prefers to spend time with adults instead of her classmates. Anna is often physically calm, but her mind and her emotions are not. Anna is very emotionally intense—she is very sensitive and becomes overly excited and overly upset easily, especially if she believes that she has done something wrong and hurt others. For example, Anna accidentally steps on another child's finger and makes that child cry. Anna immediately starts crying hysterically and cannot calm down enough to apologize for nearly fifteen minutes, far longer than the child she hurt cries. When asked why she is upset, Anna responds that "she hurt someone else." Anna feels the other child's pain and cannot forgive herself. If Anna even thinks that she did something to hurt someone else, she has extreme levels of guilt, and they prevent Anna from sleeping, eating, etc. until the issue is resolved. However sensitive Anna is to hurting others, she readily forgives those same mistakes (such as stepping on her hand) in her peers.

Anna's high levels of empathy also impact her responses to the world around her. Anna loves to read fiction, but she often gets scared and has to put books aside and take breaks when they get "scary." "Scary" includes when Beth is ill in *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott, Almonzo misbehaves and will be punished in *Farmer Boy* by Laura Ingalls Wilder, and children are mean to each other in movies. "Scary," in Anna's mind, usually represents a favorite character in an unpleasant situation. Instead of being able to separate between the character and herself, Anna becomes overwhelmed when the character is faced with adversity. As a teenager and young adult, Anna transfers this connection to movies and television shows—"scary" movies are movies that show pain and suffering, not blood and guts.

ANNA'S CASE STUDY

SECTION 2

In elementary school, Anna's perfectionism positively and negatively develops. Anna finds her schoolwork to be very easy, and she maintains very high expectations of herself and is internally motivated to be successful. While her parents want her to try her best, they are unconcerned about her grades. Anna's positive self-oriented perfectionism causes her to always try her best and to put a great deal of effort into all of her assignments.

In opposition, Anna's perfectionism can also lead to negative experiences for her. Despite Anna's parents' unwavering support, Anna views anything she does that is less than perfect as being equivalent to failure. When she comes home with a ninety-six percent on her report card, her mother jokingly asks, "Why did you only get a 96?" Anna's response is to immediately burst into tears and apologize for not doing as well as she should.

ANNA'S CASE STUDY

SECTION 3

Despite Anna's perfectionism, she is very supportive of peers who are less academically successful. However, she does hold others to high standards, especially in group projects, and constantly worries that they will not do their parts appropriately and that she will have to redo them. Anna strongly dislikes group projects for this reason, and she prefers to work alone whenever possible. Anna's group members also often dislike working with her, because they perceive her high expectations as being "bossy."

By high school, Anna is struggling Superwoman Syndrome. She overcommits and has basically no free time. Anna is on the cross country, math, Science Olympiad, and debate teams at her high school, while performing in theater productions, volunteering at her church, participating in youth group, and taking honors/AP classes. Anna claims to love everything she does, but she is constantly juggling her conflicting commitments and priorities, and rarely gets more than six hours of sleep at night.

ANNA'S CASE STUDY

SECTION 4

Anna is very ethical and focused on honesty, often to an unnecessary extent. In elementary school, Anna accidentally forgets her homework at home one day. Anna tells her teacher before class starts, and the teacher offers to let Anna complete the assignment before class and turn it in. Anna, however, perceives this as dishonest (because homework is supposed to be completed at home), and refuses to take her teacher's offer. Instead, Anna decides to accept the zero grade that she feels she has earned, while simultaneously being angry at herself for making the initial mistake.

In high school, Anna is given an assignment that involves demonstrating the route of an international journey. The teacher also provides the instructions that students "need to do it all themselves." Anna interprets the instructions strictly, and decides that this includes creating a world map independently instead of using a purchased or printed map. Anna spends hours tracing the continents out of an atlas onto tracing paper, cutting out the tracing paper to make detailed templates, and using the templates to create continents on colored paper. Anna then begins the "real" part of the project. While Anna's teacher is impressed with the level of dedication and effort she put in to making her map, Anna's teacher did not intend for her to interpret the directions that way.

ANNA'S CASE STUDY

SECTION 5

Anna loves learning and wants to improve the world. Anna graduates from her undergraduate university a year early (with multiple majors and minors) in order to volunteer with a presidential campaign. Anna studies multiple topics in depth for her degree, and then tries to help change the world by helping her candidate of choice get elected. Then, in graduate school, Anna chooses to enroll in a joint program (earning a law degree and masters of public policy simultaneously) at an Ivy League school. Upon graduating, Anna joins a law firm specializing in civil rights and constitutional legal issues.

ANNA'S CASE STUDY

SECTION 1

As a preschool student, Anna is very inquisitive and loves reading, doing math, and asking many questions. Anna understands things intuitively, and prefers to spend time with adults instead of her classmates. Anna is often physically calm, but her mind and her emotions are not. Anna is very emotionally intense—she is very sensitive and becomes overly excited and overly upset easily, especially if she believes that she has done something wrong and hurt others. For example, Anna accidentally steps on another child's finger and makes that child cry. Anna immediately starts crying hysterically and cannot calm down enough to apologize for nearly fifteen minutes, far longer than the child she hurt cries. When asked why she is upset, Anna responds that “she hurt someone else.” Anna feels the other child's pain and cannot forgive herself. If Anna even thinks that she did something to hurt someone else, she has extreme levels of guilt, and they prevent Anna from sleeping, eating, etc. until the issue is resolved. However sensitive Anna is to hurting others, she readily forgives those same mistakes (such as stepping on her hand) in her peers.

Anna's high levels of empathy also impact her responses to the world around her. Anna loves to read fiction, but she often gets scared and has to put books aside and take breaks when they get “scary.” “Scary” includes when Beth is ill in *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott, Almonzo misbehaves and will be punished in *Farmer Boy* by Laura Ingalls Wilder, and children are mean to each other in movies. “Scary,” in Anna's mind, usually represents a favorite character in an unpleasant situation. Instead of being able to separate between the character and herself, Anna becomes overwhelmed when the character is faced with adversity. As a teenager and young adult, Anna transfers this connection to movies and television shows—“scary” movies are movies that show pain and suffering, not blood and guts.

SECTION 2

In elementary school, Anna's perfectionism positively and negatively develops. Anna finds her schoolwork to be very easy, and she maintains very high expectations of herself and is internally motivated to be successful. While her parents want her to try her best, they are unconcerned about her grades. Anna's positive self-oriented perfectionism causes her to always try her best and to put a great deal of effort into all of her assignments.

In opposition, Anna's perfectionism can also lead to negative experiences for her. Despite Anna's parents' unwavering support, Anna views anything she does that is less than perfect as being equivalent to failure. When she comes home with a ninety-six percent on her report card, her mother jokingly asks, “Why did you only get a 96?” Anna's response is to immediately burst into tears and apologize for not doing as well as she should.

SECTION 3

Despite Anna's perfectionism, she is very supportive of peers who are less academically successful. However, she does hold others to high standards, especially in group projects, and constantly worries that they will not do their parts appropriately and that she will have to redo them. Anna strongly dislikes group projects for this reason, and she prefers to work alone whenever possible. Anna's group members also often dislike working with her, because they perceive her high expectations as being "bossy."

By high school, Anna is struggling Superwoman Syndrome. She overcommits and has basically no free time. Anna is on the cross country, math, Science Olympiad, and debate teams at her high school, while performing in theater productions, volunteering at her church, participating in youth group, and taking honors/AP classes. Anna claims to love everything she does, but she is constantly juggling her conflicting commitments and priorities, and rarely gets more than six hours of sleep at night.

SECTION 4

Anna is very ethical and focused on honesty, often to an unnecessary extent. In elementary school, Anna accidentally forgets her homework at home one day. Anna tells her teacher before class starts, and the teacher offers to let Anna complete the assignment before class and turn it in. Anna, however, perceives this as dishonest (because homework is supposed to be completed at home), and refuses to take her teacher's offer. Instead, Anna decides to accept the zero grade that she feels she has earned, while simultaneously being angry at herself for making the initial mistake.

In high school, Anna is given an assignment that involves demonstrating the route of an international journey. The teacher also provides the instructions that students "need to do it all themselves." Anna interprets the instructions strictly, and decides that this includes creating a world map independently instead of using a purchased or printed map. Anna spends hours tracing the continents out of an atlas onto tracing paper, cutting out the tracing paper to make detailed templates, and using the templates to create continents on colored paper. Anna then begins the "real" part of the project. While Anna's teacher is impressed with the level of dedication and effort she put in to making her map, Anna's teacher did not intend for her to interpret the directions that way.

SECTION 5

Anna loves learning and wants to improve the world. Anna graduates from her undergraduate university a year early (with multiple majors and minors) in order to volunteer with a presidential campaign. Anna studies multiple topics in depth for her degree, and then tries to help change the world by helping her candidate of choice get elected. Then, in graduate school, Anna chooses to enroll in a joint program (earning a law degree and masters of public policy simultaneously) at an Ivy League school. Upon graduating, Anna joins a law firm specializing in civil rights and constitutional legal issues.

SELF-REFLECTION ON AFFECTIVE TRAITS OF GIFTED INDIVIDUALS

Think about yourself or a student/child who stands out in your mind. Feel free to take notes about how you see yourself (or your student) displaying any of these traits. You do not have to share this reflection with anyone.

Think about the following questions.

- ∞ What traits do you (your student) exhibit? How?
- ∞ Is/was this a problem?
- ∞ Are these traits “under control?”
- ∞ How do you (the student) handle these issues?
- ∞ What tools do you (the student) use to help yourself keep things in perspective?

	You	Student or Child
High Expectations and Perfectionism		
Internal Motivation		
Emotional Sensitivity		
Empathy		
Moral Maturity		
Self-Actualization		
Sense of Humor		
Resilience		

BOOKS FOR GIFTED STUDENTS TO READ

ALL SELECTED BOOK INFORMATION IS FROM APPENDIX A OF *UNDERSTANDING THE SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LIVES OF GIFTED STUDENTS* BY THOMAS HÉBERT (2011).

PICTURE BOOKS:

The Boy Who Grew Flowers by Jen Wojtowicz (2005)

Issues: being labeled “different”; empathy in gifted children

Description: A young boy is shunned at school because he sprouts flowers every full moon. He makes a distinctive pair of shoes for a classmate who appreciates his special abilities.

Creativity by Johan Steptoe (2003)

Issues: creativity; peer relationships; culturally diverse learners

Description: Charles helps a new student from Puerto Rico get used to life at his new school.

Crow Boy by Taro Yashima (1976)

Issues: being labeled “different”; culturally diverse learners; creativity

Description: A strange Japanese boy is isolated by his differences from the other children in his village school. Eventually he becomes recognized for his unusual talents.

Elena’s Serenade by Campbell Geeslin (2004)

Issues: creativity in young gifted girls; gender role expectations; individuality

Description: Elena is a young girl in Mexico who learns to be a glassblower and develops self-confidence.

Josefina Javelina: A Hairy Tale by Susan Lowell (2005)

Issues: pursuing your dreams; creativity and problem solving in gifted girls

Description: Josefina, a javelin with a dream of becoming a famous ballerina, journeys to California in the hopes of being discovered. Eventually she finds a special place where her talent is appreciated.

Michael by Tony Bradman (2009)

Issues: behavioral problems; precocity; underachievement; individuality

Description: always late, scruffy and misbehaving, Michael was the worst boy in school, but he surprises his teachers one day.

My Great-Aunt Arizona by Gloria Houston (1997)

Issues: gender role stereotypes; being alone; relationships with others; creativity

Description: Raised as an only child in Appalachia, Arizona spends her time outdoors, exploring and reading, and eventually becomes the most influential teacher the town has ever encountered.

Norma Jean, Jumping Bean by Joanna Cole (1987)

Issues: gender role expectations; image management; overexcitabilities

Description: Norma Jean, a nice kangaroo, tries to control her rambunctious behavior to please people but eventually realizes that she must be herself—a kangaroo who never stops jumping!

Secret of the Peaceful Warrior by Dan Millman (1991)

Issues: coping skills; positive role models; peer relationships

Description: Under the guidance of a wise and caring adult, Danny learns to overcome his fears as he confronts a bully.

Tomas and the Library Lady by Pat Mora (2000)

Issues: culturally diverse learners; positive role models; creativity

Description: Tomas, the young child in a family of migrant workers, develops a meaningful relationship with the librarian as he falls in love with books.

Watch Out, Ronald Morgan by Patricia Reilly Giff (1986)

Issues: being labeled “different”; relationships with others; self-inflicted pressure

Description: Ronald Morgan bumbles his way through second grade until Miss Tyler recommends glasses. Ronald is thrilled. With glasses, he’ll be the superkid of the school. Glasses can’t do everything, but with Miss Tyler’s help, Ronald sees how super he can be.

Weslandia by Paul Fleischman (2002)

Issues: being labeled as “different”; relationships with others

Description: Entrepreneurial, creative Wesley stays true to himself when others want him to fit in. Eventually his teasers and tormenters realize that conformity may not be the best way to go.

Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge by Mem Fox (1995)

Issues: heightened sensitivity; relationships with others

Description: A young boy and an elderly woman share a warm relationship that allows them to appreciate the beauty of life together.

GRADES 3-5

A Wrinkle in Time by Madeleine L'Engle (1963)

Issues: creativity; image management; family relationships; identity

Description: A search for a missing parent, involving a fantasy, becomes a search for identity for both a young boy and his sister.

The Bat-Poet by Randall Jarrell (1996)

Issues: being labeled “different”; individuality

Description: A little brown bat is thought of as an oddball because he celebrates life in an unusual way. A meaningful allegory provides insight into an artist’s life.

Be a Perfect Person in Just Three Days! By Stephen Manes (1996)

Issues: perfectionism; peer relationships; coping skills

Description: Milo Crinkley learns that it’s okay to be less than perfect.

Bridge to Terabithia by Katherine Paterson (1977)

Issues: peer relationships; coping skills; dealing with death of a loved one; creativity

Description: A young man can be “different” much more easily if he has a friend with whom he can share his thoughts and feelings.

Class Clown by Johanna Hurwitz (1995)

Issues: precocity; perfectionism; behavior problems

Description: A third grader named Lucas is one of the smartest kids in school yet he cannot seem to stay out of trouble. Lucas doesn’t mean to be the class clown, and he learns a surprising lesson when he attempts to become a perfect student.

Crossing the Wire by Will Hobbs (2007)

Issues: overcoming adversity and developing resilience; belief in self

Description: When falling corn prices in Mexico threaten his family with starvation, 15-year-old Victor Flores heads north to cross the wire into the US so he can find employment and send money home. Victor’s journey is filled with near-death situations as he must decide whom to trust. Through his desperate struggle, Victor learns much about courage and love of family.

The Gift-Giver by Joyce Hansen (2005)

Issues: gender role expectations; multicultural learners; image management; perseverance; peer relationships

Description: Gifted loner Amir moves to an inner city neighborhood and teaches Doris, another gifted Black student, and other peers how to feel better about themselves and how to appreciate everyone’s talents.

The Landry News by Andrew Clements (2007)

Issues: creativity; perseverance; using one’s talents for positive results; positive role models

Description: A fifth grader writes an editorial about her teacher that inspires many important changes at her school.

Matilda by Roald Dahl (1988)

Issues: precocity; creativity; gender role expectations

Description: Matilda is a highly gifted child who learns to cope with growing up in an anti-intellectual home.

The Schernoff Discoveries by Gary Paulsen (1998)

Issues: peer relationships; scientific giftedness

Description: Harold Schernoff is a science whiz and a social nerd. He has a theory for solving every problem, from middle school dating to how to buy a car when you are under age. When he and his best friend join forces to test his theories, nothing goes according to plan.

Smiles to Go by Jerry Spinelli (2008)

Issues: friendships; teenagers searching for self-actualization

Description: Will Tuppence's life has always been driven by rules of science and logic. When he discovers in ninth-grade science class that protons decay, he begins to look at the world differently and develops a new perspective on the important relationships in his life.

Someday Angeline by Louis Sachar (1994)

Issues: multipotentiality; prodigies; image management; peer relationships

Description: Angeline is an 8-year-old who has been accelerated to sixth grade, and she must deal with the social issues of "being too smart." The mean kids in school call her a freak, her teacher finds her troublesome, and even her father doesn't know how to handle a gifted girl. Angeline doesn't want to be a freak or a genius—she just wants to be herself.

Surviving the Applewhites by Stephanie S. Tolan (2002)

Issues: underachievement; creativity; relationships with others; image management

Description: When Jake Semple is kicked out of his latest school, the Applewhites, and eccentric family of artists, offer to have him move in with them and attend their unstructured Creativity Academy. Through his new family life, Jake explores interests and discovers talents he never knew he had.

Waiting for Normal by Leslie Connor (2008)

Issues: coping with family challenges; searching for friendship; finding emotional support beyond one's family

Description: Addie must learn to understand her mother's erratic behavior and being separated by her loving stepfather and half-sisters when she and her mother move out to live on their own.

GRADES 6-12

The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian by Sherman Alexie (2007)

Issues: cultural identity development; creativity; twice-exceptionality

Description: Arnold Spirit, also known as “Junior,” is a budding cartoonist growing up on the Spokane Indian reservation. Born with several medical problems, he is often the target of bullies. He leaves the reservation when he transfers to an affluent White school in a neighboring rural community where the only other Indian is the school mascot. When he joins the basketball team and meets his former classmates on the court, he struggles with questions revolving around community, identity, and tribe and discovers internal strength he never knew he had.

Among Friends by Carline B. Cooney (1998)

Issues: multipotentiality; perfectionism; musical giftedness; peer relationships; coping with pressure

Description: Junior Jennie Quint, an amazingly talented composer, writer, and musician, finds herself more isolated with each success. In addition, her parents and school officials display her as a “trophy student,” which simply adds to her troubles.

The Car by Gary Paulsen (2006)

Issues: developing one’s independence; problem solving in gifted boys; developing self-understanding; developing resilience to overcome adversity

Description: Terry, a 14-year-old, is abandoned by his parents. He travels west in search of his uncle in a car he built himself. Along the way, he picks up two Vietnam veterans, learns from their experiences, and ultimately learns about himself.

Chasing Redbird by Sharon Creech (1998)

Issues: family relationships; coping with death; introversion; image management; heightened sensitivity

Description: Zinny is one of seven kids and often escapes the hustled and bustle of her family by going to the quiet house of her aunt and uncle. When her aunt dies, Zinny thinks it’s her fault. She ends up dealing with her feelings during the summer as she clears a long-overgrown trail that parallels her emotions.

Cowboys Don’t Cry by Marilyn Halvorson (1998)

Issues: heightened sensitivity; family relationships; image management

Description: Shane Morgan couldn’t be happier when he and his father inherit a small ranch. Tired of following the rodeo circuit, Shane looks forward to a calmer lifestyle with his dad. In the new environment, Shane and his father face troubles as they must define manhood.

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time by Mark Haddon (2004)

Issues: twice-exceptionality; familial relationships; image management; relationships with others; coping skills

Description: A highly gifted student with learning disabilities embarks upon a series of adventures to figure out how his neighbor’s dog was killed, learning family secrets and important things about himself along the way.

The Facts and Fictions of Minna Pratt by Patricia McLachlan (1990)

Issues: image management; family relationships; musical giftedness; creativity

Description: Minna is surrounded by gifted people: her mother is an author, her father is a psychologist, her younger brother “knows everything,” and she plays in a quartet of very talented musicians. She learns to value her family because of their eccentricities and to value herself because of her own.

Fast Talk on a Slow Track by Rita Williams-Garcia (1998)

Issues: multicultural learners; self-inflicted pressure; peer relationships

Description: Class valedictorian Denzel Watson has never experienced the humiliation of failure until he tries to bluff his way through orientation at Princeton. His reaction to failure costs him dearly and forces him to confront himself for the first time in his life.

Homeless Bird by Gloria Whelan (2001)

Issues: artistic differences; resilience; search for identity

Description: When Koly’s ill-fated arranged marriage leaves her a widow at 13, she forges a life for herself that opposes tradition but highlights her creativity.

If I Love You, Am I Trapped Forever? By M.E. Kerr (2009)

Issues: peer and parental expectations; multipotentiality; coping skills

Description: A handsome, multitalented, and popular young man has a great deal of pressure placed on him with expectations from his high school friends, parents, and self. He struggles to remain his image.

Millicent Min, Girl Genius by Lisa Yee (2003)

Issues: accelerated gifted girls coping with social issues; hiding one’s intelligence to gain friends

Description: Millie, an 11-year-old, is a highly gifted girl enrolled in a summer college poetry class and waiting for her high school senior year. Because she is socially awkward, her parents sign her up for a volleyball team and enlist her tutor Stanford Wong, her nemesis. Her volleyball teammate Emily becomes her first true friend but Millie feels compelled to camouflage her intelligence.

Speak by Laurie Halse Anderson (2006)

Issues: coping with trauma; image management; underachievement

Description: A creative high school student’s world has been shattered so much that she can no longer speak. A story of perseverance in the face of trauma.

Stargirl by Jerry Spinelli (2004)

Issues: nonconformity; image management

Description: When eccentric Stargirl joins the ranks at Mica High School, her utter ignorance of the social order and genuine affection for everyone throws the whole community for a loop.

Stanford Wong Flunks Big-Time by Lisa Yee (2006)

Issues: underachievement; family expectations; peer group pressure

Description: From the day his father named him for his alma mater, great things were expected of Stanford Wong. When he flunks sixth-grade English class and has to attend summer school, he worries that he might lose his star status on the basketball team. His summer is filled with turmoil as he misses out on basketball camp, he observes his beloved grandmother's increasing dementia, and he has to face being tutored by Millicent Min, a girl genius.

RESOURCES FOR PARENTS AND TEACHERS

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL NEEDS OF GIFTED STUDENTS

BOOKS:

Hébert, T. H. (2011). *Understanding the social and emotional lives of gifted students*. Waco, TX: Prufrock Press.

- Basis of this presentation
- Great appendices with book and movie suggestions
- Some sample lesson plans

Davis, G. A., Rimm, S. B., & Siegle, D. (2010). *Education of the gifted and talented*. New York, NY: Pearson.

- Introduction to all things gifted
- Lots of foundational knowledge

WEBSITES

Hoagie's Gifted (hoagiesgifted.org)

- Great resource for all things gifted, including community support
- Special section dealing with social-emotional needs at http://www.hoagiesgifted.org/social_emotional.htm

Supporting Emotional Needs of the Gifted (SENG) (sengifted.org)

- Includes a free library with many articles about social-emotional issues at <http://sengifted.org/resources/resource-library/articles-library>
- Also have referrals to mental health professionals

National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) (NAGC.org)

- National advocacy, research, support organization
- Includes huge annual conference and numerous publications
- Social-emotional information is at <http://www.nagc.org/search/node/Social%20emotional>

LESSON SUGGESTIONS BASED ON BOOKS

THESE LESSONS CAN BE DONE INDIVIDUALLY, IN SMALL GROUPS, OR WHOLE CLASS

TIPS

- ∞ Select books that match the characteristic you are trying to address and/or the needs of your students.
- ∞ Have students engage in follow up activities—this helps them process the books more, and allows them to make their own meanings on their own time.
- ∞ Don't force students to apply the book to their own life—students often figure it out on their own as they engage in the discussion, activities, etc.

LESSON IDEAS- FOLLOW UPS TO THE BOOKS

- ∞ Engage students in a relaxed art project (related to the book) and informal discussion while they work
- ∞ Reflect on the character(s)—what they noticed, positives, negatives, problem-solving skills, etc.
- ∞ Student-created puppet theater and performance
- ∞ Students write the next chapter/scene in the book (logically continue the story)
- ∞ Role play—can connect characters to real-life situations
- ∞ Draw comics or write in captions to existing comics that reflect the book
- ∞ Express response to the book through poetry, art, performance, etc.
- ∞ Letters to the characters or author (i.e., *Dear Mr. Henshaw* by Beverly Cleary)

ADDITIONAL IDEAS- BIOGRAPHIES AND VIDEOS, MORE LESSON PLANS

- ∞ There is a huge selection of biographies and videos listed in the appendices, as well as additional lesson plans in *Understanding the Social and Emotional Lives of Gifted Students* (Hébert, 2011)
- ∞ Students can use biographies as ways to connect to role models—especially poignant for students of diverse cultures and/or females