

Self-Reflective Journal Report

While sitting down to write this report I got to thinking about how I could add some originality to an assignment that normally would lend itself to boredom. Then I looked up and saw an advertisement for the newly released (to DVD) movie The Emoji Movie, and I thought to myself, I'd read a report that used whimsical images to display a thought or feeling. So, I'd like to share with you my "journey", if you will, on how I progressed my understanding of learning during the 14 weeks of this class.

CONFUSED



My first emoji to describe my understanding of this class was **Confused**. I have to admit that I was not sure how this class would work out when I first read the syllabus. I was originally under the impression that this class would be more about building upon the lesson material learned from the previous Java course and less about proving a fluency in a particular topic based on submissions of our own Java code. While I was somewhat encouraged after reading the fluency list, especially since topics like JSON, Hibernate, and Servlets peaked my intrigue, I was still ultimately discouraged at the format of the class. To further compound my discouragement, I could see that there was a large commitment with group work, which had a negative connotation in my mind based on previous experiences last semester.

NERVOUS



My next emoji comes after reading the requirements of our group meetings, needing to present a topic during each team meeting got me **Nervous**. How was I going to develop a website each week that would correctly illustrate my assigned fluency topic? More importantly, how was I going to get the material needed to accurately present the material to my team members? While I felt somewhat confident in my abilities, the sure load of the assignment felt daunting, especially since my available time each week is difficult to come by. My other thought at the same time, what if my team member has a tough time delivering the material, was I supposed to rely entirely on their capabilities to delivery my assignment? To further compound my **Nervousness**, three of our team meetings ended up dropping the course or moving to another team, leaving us with just three team members to share the load! This would require preparing and presenting a new topic almost every single week.

ENCOURAGED



After meeting with my group and discussing the format and direction of the class, I started to feel **Encouraged**. This class might actually be doable! There were still lots of questions in my mind, but I could see where this class was going, and I could see the stepping stones on how to get to the finish line. Now the timing the first couple of weeks of the course was not good for me as I needed to leave town for a week to work at a conference in San Francisco. This caused me to have to call in remotely for our first team meeting, I even did my first ever presentation in my hotel room after a long day of work! But I instantly changed my mood about my fellow team members and once again felt **Encouraged** at their abilities to present and provide material for me to develop my own code for their presented topics.

BRING IT ON



With a general understanding of the topics and after our first team meeting, I took on the challenge of working on completing my own fluency topics. In order to keep pace, I decided to work on the topics that were presented that week, then spend any additional time preparing the topics needed for my presentations. My thinking was, that if I can keep pace with the weekly topic presentations (at least two topics per week), that I would have additional time once we reached the end of the topic list. This would allow for any adjustments needed in order to achieve the needed grade to reach the personal application. While the pace seemed daunting, I found that the ideas flowed very well, oftentimes they were spurred during the weekly team meeting. This allowed me to direct my research and coding towards the ideas that I already had in my head, and not spend too much time just coming up with an idea of what to work on.

I also noticed that our team lacked one individual taking charge. While the group as a whole functioned well and the meetings flowed, I decided to step up in small ways to help direct traffic. Once the meetings began I would help drive the conversations to the presenters and organize the time that was being spent. I would then post the team meeting video on the community site and add in the topics as well as the times on the link, so it would be easy for those reviewing the presentations to jump right to the topic they needed to watch.

EXCITED



As my grades started coming back, I saw that my efforts were not in vain. I started to get **Excited** each time a grade would come back! I also gained a lot of **Excitement** to tackle the next topic, and gained confidence that I would be able to complete the task and earn a worthwhile grade. With this new-found confidence, I was able to learn at a faster pace than I think I would have from reading about the topics in a book. I was also not limited

to learning at a specific pace. Although I elected to learn at the pace of the topics being presented each week in our team meeting, I was given the liberty to choose that path.

I also wanted to help others in the class, so I would share in our team meetings my successes and how I got to that point in my code. I would also spend time after the presentations to help answer any questions on previous topics and even review their code to help get to the next grading level. I would also share on our community site any websites that I felt helped my understanding of a given topic. I also made a concerted effort to check the discussion boards and provide any help to those outside our team.

PANIC



As the class progressed, a feeling of **Panic** started to creep in as I started to contemplate and work on my personal application. After reviewing the requirements, I learned that a chunk of the assignment needed to be done using Android Studio, something that to that point had not been discussed. Even the video that was posted as a “tutorial” only provided minimal guidance and was not nearly enough to formulate any respectable UI component to the assignment. However, someone posted on the class discussion board a link to a YouTube video with some helpful step by step instructions on how to create a basic app on Android Studio. This was extremely helpful and spawned additional videos that helped me gain valuable knowledge on how to build an Android app. I think continued to build on that knowledge and found a way to interact Android Studio’s with Eclipse/Tomcat, where I then could build on top of that and find a way to interact Eclipse/Tomcat with a MySQL database. With the three tiers of my program able to communicate end to end, I was able to tie everything together and complete my project and turn in an assignment I was really proud of!

MIND BLOWN



Finally, now that all the assignments are finished, I’ve had a chance to contemplate on the progress that was made and how I’ve grown. I started the semester very cynical about the outline of this class and felt like it was designed in a way where we did all the work on our own. I also did not feel my abilities were up to par to complete all the fluency topics and did not see how learning on my own would get me to the level I needed to be at in order to succeed. However, I now see that the class is designed to help us grow as a team! While the development work is done on an individual level, the team structure is put in place to help drive your individual success, since everyone has a driving interest with their topic presentations.

This new approach to learning has pushed me in directions I haven't been pushed before in an educational setting. The typical approach has been very much centered around a text book and a defined curriculum and this class has been almost a polar opposite. It has forced me to seek out the answers on my own and come up with my own planning in order to meet the final deadline date. This relates more closely to how things are done in the real business world. You are given a list of requirements and a deadline on when all the requirements must be met. A client would never give you a roadmap on how to complete the tasks, that is entirely on you to figure out and to deliver on time. It's not uncommon for a new project to land on your lap that forces you to learn a whole new technology. It's how you handle these opportunities that help define your business potential to employers.

In the end, this class has taught me the value of working in a team atmosphere, how to search for and implement my own research, and how to work within a tight timeline.