

# South Brunswick School District



## Parent Guide to Language Arts Literacy

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### District Mission

The South Brunswick School District lives its mission statement: To prepare students to be lifelong learners, critical thinkers, effective communicators and wise decision makers. This will be accomplished through the use of the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards (NJCCCS) and/or the New Jersey Student Learning Standards (NJSLS) at all grade levels. The schools will maintain an environment that promotes intellectual challenge, creativity, social and emotional growth and the healthy physical development of each student.



**Curriculum aligned with NJSLS (NJ Student Learning Standards)**

**Board Approval of Language Arts Literacy Curriculum  
August 2017**

**This curriculum is approved for all regular education programs as specified and for adoption or adaptation by all programs including those for Special Education, English Language Learners, At-Risk Students and Gifted and Talented Students in accordance with Board of Education Policy.**

## **Note to Parents**

The curriculum guide you are about to enter is just that, a guide. Teachers use this document to steer their instruction and to ensure continuity between classes and across levels. It provides guidance to the teachers on what students need to know and able to do with regard to the learning of a particular content area.

The curriculum is intentionally written with some “spaces” in it so that teachers can add their own ideas and activities so that the world language classroom is personalized to the students.

## **How to Read the Curriculum Document**

<b>Curriculum</b>	Area of content (e.g. Science)
<b>Topic</b>	Course or Unit of Study (e.g. Biology)
<b>Grade Level</b>	Grade Level Cluster (e.g. High School) or specific grade level (e.g. Kindergarten)
<b>Summary</b>	A brief overview of the course or unit of study.
<b>Rationale</b>	A statement as to why we are teaching this course or unit.
<b>Interdisciplinary Connections</b>	Which other areas of content to which there is major linkage. For example, a health education unit might link to science, language arts, social studies, art, physical education, etc.
<b>21<sup>st</sup> Century Connections</b>	How this course or unit is preparing students to be college and career ready. Referred to as S.A.L.T., each course or unit indicates which of the following it is building: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skills such as critical or creative thinking, collaboration, communication, or core values</li> <li>• Awareness such as global, cross-cultural or career.</li> <li>• Literacy such as information, media, technology, etc.</li> <li>• Traits necessary for success in life and careers such as productivity.</li> </ul>
<b>Terminology</b>	Key vocabulary and terms
<b>Standards</b>	Here you will find the standards that this course or unit of study is addressing. Our curriculum is standards-based. A complete copy of the standards may also be found at: <a href="#">State of NJ - Department of Education - NJ Student Learning Standards</a>
<b>Enduring Understandings</b>	The big ideas, concepts or life lessons that students walk away with at the end of a unit of study.
<b>Essential Questions</b>	Open ended questions that are considered throughout the unit of study. These are big, “worthy of wonder” questions often with multiple responses.
<b>Objectives</b>	The discrete skills and knowledge that students will gain during the unit of study.
<b>Assessments</b>	Assessments (tests, quizzes, projects, activities) that tell us if the students grasped the enduring understandings of the unit.
<b>Lesson Plans &amp; Pacing</b>	Scope and sequence of lessons: how many, how long & approximately in what order.
<b>Resources</b>	Major resources associated with the course or unit.

### **Language Arts Literacy Acknowledgments**

We are appreciative of the leadership provided by our curriculum supervisors and specialists and the knowledge, skills, work and effort of the teachers who served on our curriculum writing teams. In many cases, our units are “home-grown.” While aligning with NJ Student Learning Standards, they are designed with the needs of the South Brunswick student population in mind.

### **Articulation**

The Supervisors, Specialists, Curriculum Chairpersons, Technology Staff Developers, Directors and the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction meet for articulation at bi-monthly roundtables and ongoing content meetings throughout the year.

Among the topics of discussion are the following: standards, curriculum review cycle, curriculum mapping, resources (ordering, budgeting, inventory), lesson plans, observation look-fors, professional development, NJ Quality Single Accountability Continuum and academic achievement, placement, acceleration, enrichment, basic skills, instructional support, technology proficiencies and content-specific technologies, formative and summative assessments, and various curriculum tasks.

Curriculum Development Teams comprised of teachers at every grade level cluster along with representative special education as applicable meet together throughout the year as needed. In a time period of major revision, the teams will meet with greater frequency.



*There is an art of reading, as well as an art of thinking, and an art of writing.*

~ Isaac Disraeli ~

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## PREAMBLE

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The essence of learning is the acquisition and development of language. In order for our students to be successful learners in all aspects of their program and achieve their full potential, they must be adept in the use of language arts skills. Proficient communication skills will be required in the world of the twenty-first century. This demands that our students are skilled in both the receptive and expressive forms of communication. Since language is a powerful dimension of the human condition, it is our hope that the students of South Brunswick will acquire skills enabling them to communicate successfully in their world and appreciate both the power and beauty of language. The South Brunswick Language Arts Curriculum assumes the integration of reading, writing, listening, speaking and language. All the elements are meant to function together; each is incomplete without the others.

The curriculum includes the following components.

**Reading** is a complex process through which readers actively construct meaning and connect with other's ideas. The reading process requires that readers:

- Relate prior knowledge and personal experiences to written text
- Draw information from the three cuing systems (what language means, how language is structured and the relationship between sounds and letters) to comprehend what is read
- Apply and adjust strategies before, during and after reading, to aid in understanding and remembering what has been read
- Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and make logical inferences from it
- Cite specific textual evidence to support conclusions drawn from text
- Understand words, their definitions, variations and contexts
- Respond to text in aesthetic and critical ways
- Read increasingly more complex text with comprehension

The **Study of Literature** provides students with opportunities to grow intellectually, socially and emotionally as they consider and interpret:

- Links between attitudes and behaviors
- Universal themes and how those are developed across literature
- Diverse cultures and perspectives
- Common aspects of human behavior
- Author's use of literary techniques to introduce, suggest, enhance, and/or reinforce ideas
- Connections among related texts (This speaks to inter-textual studies)

The **Study of Informational Text** provides students with opportunities to:

- Read to analyze, synthesize and evaluate information
- Read to compare authors' perspective and point of view on topics of study
- Read to interpret general academic and domain-specific words and phrases in a text
- Read deeply across the curriculum in History, Science, Social Studies and Technical subjects

**Writing** is a complex process through which writers actively construct meaning for themselves and others. Writers compose text in order to communicate, express an idea or opinion or enhance learning.

The writing process requires that writers:

- Generate, explore, and plan out ideas in preparation for writing
- Reflect on their own experiences and those of others
- Collaborate with others to refine ideas

- Revise their writing to change, clarify and make it powerful
- Edit and publish to share their writing

Writers write for a variety of purposes

- Writers are expected to engage in three main types of writing: narrative, opinion/argument, and informational.
- Writers write about all disciplines to process and improve their thinking.
- Writers write about their reading to synthesize information and explore new thinking.

**Speaking** is critical to the learning process. Language development occurs when students engage in conversation and discussion. Opportunities to speak in front of both small and large groups, including formal presentations and informal discussions, help build the skills necessary to communicate effectively. Students who are effective speakers adjust oral communications for different purposes and audiences and modify oral communication in response to the reaction of others. Students are expected to speak effectively when collaborating in discussions and during more formal presentations of knowledge and ideas.

**Listening** is a complex process. Students who are effective listeners receive, interpret, respond to and evaluate information obtained from a variety of sources. Active listening applies to both conversations and viewing media.

**Language** is the skill of using conventions, vocabulary and grammar in a purposeful manner to make speaking and writing more precise. Instruction should be integrated into students' authentic work in reading, writing, and speaking.

## 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY CONNECTIONS

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SALT (skills, awareness, literacy and traits) are developed and nurtured in the language arts program.

Skills:

- Critical Thinking & Problem Solving
- Creative Thinking & Innovation
- Communication & Collaboration
- Core Ethical Values

Awareness:

- Global
- Cross Cultural
- Career

Literacy (beyond ELA)

- Links to all other areas of Core Content
- Technology Literacy
- Media Literacy

Traits or Habits of Mind:

- Initiative
- Productivity
- Accountability
- Responsibility
- Self-direction
- Perseverance

- Empathy
- Responding with wonderment and awe
- Take responsible risks



## PROGRAM DELIVERY

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Our Language Arts classrooms are effective standards-based environments that foster understanding of big ideas and thinking about essential questions. Below are the varied “Language Arts paths” that students follow during their course of study in South Brunswick.

### **Elementary School:**

The K-5 Language Arts program is typically divided into three “blocks” which helps teachers deliver a balanced literacy approach: Reading (read aloud, shared reading, guided reading, and independent reading) Writing Workshop (mini-lessons and conferencing) and Word Study (spelling, phonics and vocabulary). Leveled books, mentor texts and trade literature are used for reading and writing instruction.

### **Middle School:**

Students in the middle school have two blocks of Language Arts Literacy daily. The Language Arts writing program includes instruction in the writing process in multiple genres for diverse purposes and audiences; reflection; mini-lessons in grammar, vocabulary development, usage, and mechanics. The novel-based literature program includes core novels for whole-class instruction, supplemented with thematically-related nonfiction pieces; literature circles; and independent reading.

### **High School:**

Students continue with their study of Language Arts Literacy during their four years at the high school. There is four-year sequence that is required for graduation.

- Core Courses (4-Year Sequence): English, Academic and Honors English I, II, III, and IV
- Academic Support: English I with Lab (9<sup>th</sup>), English Skills Lab I and II (10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>)
- Illustrative Electives: Creative Writing, Writing for Film and Media in the 21<sup>st</sup>-Century, Newspaper Journalism, Journalism for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Introduction to Film, Comedy in Film and Television I-IV, Sports in Literature and Film, Art of Screenwriting, Art of Public Speaking, Honors of Public Speaking, Fundamentals of Public Speaking (MCC accredited college-level course)
- English IV: College Composition (MCC accredited college-level course)
- Advanced Placement English III: Language and Composition and Advanced Placement English IV: Literature and Composition (with prerequisites).

# ASSESSMENT

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There are multiple and varied forms of assessment at each grade level. What follows is a list of key assessment tools used at each level.

## Formative Assessments

- Teacher made tests, quizzes and projects
- Teacher observations/ conferences
- Student response activities
- Rubrics/checklists
- Published student writing
- Unit assessments
- Student Reflections

## Benchmark Assessments

### Early Childhood

- K-2 Early Childhood Literacy Portfolio- holistic score
  - K Concepts of Print
  - K-1 Letter and Sound Recognition (alphabet task)
  - K-2 Word Awareness, Writing Assessment (WAWA)
  - K-2 Sight Words
  - K-2 Running Record (Reading Benchmark Assessment System)
  - K-2 Narrative Writing Sample

### Grades 3-5

- PARCC- grades 3, 4, 5
- Grade 3-5 Test Practice Assessments
- Grade 3-5 Timed Writing Tasks (used on occasion)
- Grades 3-5 Running Records (Reading Benchmark Assessment System)
- Grades 3-5 Research Tasks- rubric scored (Social Studies, Science and Health Education)

### Middle School Level

- PARCC- grades 6, 7, 8
- Grades 6-8 Research Tasks
- Grammar Pre- and Post Tests
- Word Study Trimester Exams
- Timed Writing Tasks
- Performance-based Reading Tasks

### High School Level

- English I-IV Summer Reading Assessment
- English I-IV Final Exam (process writing)
- PARCC Grades 9, 10, 11
- Grade 12 Research Task- rubric scored (Health Education)
- Timed Writing Tasks
- Performance-based Reading Tasks
- Simulations

## RESOURCES

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The resources for English Language Arts are rich and varied. Generally speaking, the following materials are used to anchor the program at each level.

### Elementary Level

- Guided reading leveled books (fiction and nonfiction)
- Core novels (fiction and nonfiction)
- Grammar resources
- Word study resources
- Handwriting resources
- Writing resources
- Teacher Language Arts guides
- Reading Benchmark Assessment System

### Middle School Level

- Literature Circle novel sets
- Whole class core novels
- Word study resources
- Writing resources
- Grammar resources
- Teacher guides

### High School Level

- Core novels
- Novel sets
- Grammar resources
- Teacher guides

# READING LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS

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## **Reading Language Arts (RL)**

The RL standards offer a focus for instruction each year, K-12, and help ensure that students gain adequate exposure to a range of texts and tasks. Rigor is also infused through the requirement that students read increasingly complex texts through the grades.

The grade level standards correspond to the College and Career Readiness (CCR) anchor standards below by number. The CCR anchor standards and grade-specific standards work in tandem to define college and career readiness expectations—the former providing broad standards, the latter providing specificity.

### Key Ideas and Details

1. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
2. Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
3. Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

### Craft and Structure

4. Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.
5. Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.
6. Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

### Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.<sup>1</sup>
8. Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.
9. Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

### Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

10. Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

## **Reading: Informational Text (RI)**

The CCR standards above also apply to this set of K-12 standards: Key Ideas and Details, Craft and Structure, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, and Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity.

## **Reading: Foundational Skills (RF)**

These are K-5 standards that are directed toward fostering students' understanding and working knowledge of concepts of print, the alphabetic principle, and other basic conventions of the English writing system. These foundational skills are not an end in and of themselves; rather, they are necessary and important components of an effective, comprehensive reading program designed to develop proficient readers with the capacity to comprehend texts across a range of types and disciplines.

- Print Concepts (K-1)
- Phonological Awareness (K-1)
- Phonics and Word Recognition (K-5)

- Fluency (K-5)

## **WRITING STANDARDS**

The following standards for K–12 offer a focus for instruction each year to help ensure that students gain adequate mastery of a range of skills and applications. Each year in their writing, students should demonstrate increasing sophistication in all aspects of language use, from vocabulary and syntax to the development and organization of ideas, and they should address increasingly demanding content and sources.

The grade level standards correspond to the College and Career Readiness (CCR) anchor standards below by number. The CCR and grade-specific standards are necessary complements—the former providing broad standards, the latter providing additional specificity—that together define the skills and understandings that all students must demonstrate.

### Text Types and Purposes

1. Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

### Production and Distribution of Writing

4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
5. Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.
6. Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others.

### Research to Build and Present Knowledge

7. Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
8. Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.
9. Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

### Range of Writing

10. Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

## **SPEAKING AND LISTENING STANDARDS**

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The following standards offer a focus for instruction each year to help ensure that students gain adequate mastery of a range of skills and applications.

The grade level standards correspond to the College and Career Readiness (CCR) anchor standards below by number. The CCR and grade-specific standards are necessary complements—the former providing broad standards, the latter providing additional specificity—that together define the skills and understandings that all students must demonstrate.

### Comprehension and Collaboration

1. Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
2. Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.
3. Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.

### Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

4. Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
5. Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations.
6. Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and communicative tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

## LANGUAGE STANDARDS

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The following standards for grades offer a focus for instruction each year to help ensure that students gain adequate mastery of a range of skills and applications.

The above standards define what students should understand and be able to do by the end of each grade. They correspond to the College and Career Readiness (CCR) anchor standards below by number. The CCR and grade-specific standards are necessary complements—the former providing broad standards, the latter providing additional specificity—that together define the skills and understandings that all students must demonstrate.

### Conventions of Standard English K-12

1. Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
2. Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

### Knowledge of Language K-12

3. Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

### Vocabulary Acquisition and Use K-12

4. Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting general and specialized reference materials, as appropriate.
5. Demonstrate understanding of word relationships and nuances in word meanings.
6. Acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when encountering an unknown term important to comprehension or expression.

## READING ACROSS THE CONTENT

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There is also a set of explicit literacy standards for grades 6-12 in History/Social Studies, Science and Technical Subjects. It's important to note that the standards for grades K–5 reading in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects are integrated into the K–5 Reading standards. The CCR anchor standards in reading and writing, and grade level standards in literacy work in tandem to define college and career readiness expectations—the former providing broad standards, the latter providing additional specificity.



# **ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS CURRICULUM OVERVIEWS**

## **ELEMENTARY**



# KINDERGARTEN-SECOND GRADE UNITS OF STUDY:

## AN OVERVIEW



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## KINDERGARTEN

### Reading Units of Study

- What routines do we need in place in order to do our best reading work?
- How does understanding “Concepts About Print” and parts of the texts, help students understand how printed language works?
- How can phonemic and phonological awareness help students build a foundation for word awareness?
- How does understanding the “alphabetic principle” (when letters change in words, so do the sounds) improve word-solving?
- How can conversation and responding to text enhance reading comprehension?
- How does identifying story elements improve comprehension?

#### On The Road to Reading

Summary: Students have been exposed to storybooks, poems and informational texts since the start of the year. By providing time for students to read, think, and talk together about these books, the teacher will continue to build their growing knowledge of concepts about print and early reading skills. This unit provides instruction to heighten students’ sense for how stories go, as well as building greater success with the use of literary language and expressive reading. The work of this unit will also strengthen students’ ability to think more deeply about story elements such as characters and plot. Students will continue to have many experiences with informational text and focus on asking “I wonder” questions and searching for answers.

As identified in the Common Core Standards, “Foundational” skills will continue to be a priority. Some of the early skills include locating known words, one-to-one matching, using initial sounds and pictures to guess about unknown words, and reading with expression. A focus on early comprehension skills will include prediction, monitoring for meaning and visualizing.

The essential questions for this unit of study:

- How do readers use concepts about print to effectively navigate text?
- How can phonemic and phonological awareness help students build a foundation for word solving?
- How can rereading text build confidence in a reader and improve comprehension?
- How do readers make predictions using illustrations and words in books?
- How do readers use what they know about story events to retell a story?
- How can conversation and responding to text enhance reading comprehension?
- How do readers use words, pictures and text features to learn from informational text?
- How do readers use pictures and text to learn new vocabulary words?

### Readers Are Active Problem Solvers

Summary: The goal of this unit is to build and support reading independence in students. At this time of the year, students should need less support with basic reading work and should be able to work more independently for longer periods of time. That is, readers are learning that they don't always have to ask for help when they get to tricky words. Kindergarteners will learn that they can tackle their own reading troubles by drawing on strategies and reading tools they've learned in the previous units and new strategies provided in this unit. The goal of this unit is for students to be active problem solvers.

One focus will be to teach students to use sources of information—visual, structure, and meaning—when reading their leveled little books. Students need to develop a variety of flexible ways to use letter-sound relationships and word parts, so they can take words apart, letter-by-letter or cluster-by-cluster or use what they know about some words to help them read new words. They also need to learn how to use language structure and meaning of the text to support their word solving. “When word solving is efficient and smooth, attention is freed for deeper thinking about the text.” (Fountas and Pinnell). Providing frequent opportunities for students to be reading and rereading familiar text will help reinforce word solving and build confidence.

Teachers will continue to support new books with “book introductions.” When children have a sense of what a book is about, and how the pages support the story, they can draw on that meaning to help problem-solve what the text says. This unit will continue to build upon the work of accessing prior knowledge, predicting using the text clues and prior knowledge, and making connections from the work done in previous units. Students will be expected not only to make predictions and use the pictures, but also to hold on to them as they read. We want them to think, “How do these pages connect?” so they can hold the whole story or text in their heads as they read.

The essential questions for this unit of study:

- How do students figure out unknown words?
- How do students apply strategies to improve comprehension and fluency?
- How do readers think about the whole story- from beginning to end?

### Exploring Information Text

Summary: In this unit, teachers will continue to provide students with opportunities to read and think and learn about the world, while we nurture their curiosities. This unit is designed to teach students how to discover more about the world through reading information books. We will closely study the pictures and imagine the sounds we might hear if we could be inside the photographs. Just like an actual visit to a new place, through reading students will learn new words and facts.

In this unit, students will explore informational texts to learn how to use reading to think and learn about the world. Informational texts will not be new to students as they have been introduced to both fiction and non-fiction texts all year. While in earlier units, students have been focusing on building “reading muscles” for learning how to read; now their attention will be focused on reading to learn. A new focus for students will be to ask and answer questions about content and determine a main topic and details from what they read.

The essential questions for this unit of study:

- How do informational texts help readers increase their knowledge about a topic?
- How can readers use pictures, illustrations, and captions to make meaning?
- How can readers use visual, structure, and meaning cues to read and understand tricky words while reading.

- How do different authors present information on the same topic in different ways?

### Readers Become Character Experts

**Summary:** deepen a reader’s understanding of story. Students will learn to make inferences about a story character’s feelings by using illustrations, text clues and prior knowledge. Of course, characters exist in stories, and stories have plots and events, so readers will also ask and answer questions about the story plot and major events as they read. Attention should continue to focus on all of the key details in a story.

Through discussions about characters in read-alouds, shared reading and guided reading, students will identify the main character and notice how the character’s thoughts, actions and feelings change during the story. The Common Core Standards require that students compare and contrast the adventures and experiences of characters in familiar stories. Teachers should demonstrate how to compare and contrast characters in familiar read-aloud books during shared reading. This can also be accomplished by comparing the adventures of a single character in a series. For example, Rosemary Wells has written many books with strong characters like Max and Ruby. Peter, from Ezra Jack Keats’ books, would also be a good choice, especially if the teacher would like to have a more realistic character. Some possible shared reading texts include “The Meanies” series by Joy Cowley, “Mrs. Wishy Washy” series by Joy Cowley, or the “Greedy Cat” series by Joy Cowley. “Elephant and Piggie” series by Mo Willems. “Henry and Mudge” series by Cynthia Rylant. “Frog and Toad” series by Arnold Lobel.

While doing this big work with characters, it’s equally important to reinforce reading strategy instruction and each student’s progression through reading levels. The teacher will want to use guided reading time to continue teaching the skills students need as they become more proficient decoders, meaning makers, and more fluent readers. Through read-alouds and shared reading there are ample opportunities for studying characters in meaningful ways.

The essential questions for this unit of study:

- How can readers increase their comprehension by studying characters?
- What story clues tell what a character is thinking and feeling?
- How do we notice changes in characters across a story?
- Why is the order in which things happen in a story important?
- How can readers use illustrations and the text to identify character traits?
- How does a reader figure out words he/she does not know?
- How does learning new vocabulary make you a better reader?

## **KINDERGARTEN**

### **Writing Units of Study**

#### Launching The Writing Workshop

**Summary:** This is the first writing unit for the Kindergarten Units of Study. It is important to spend time rolling out expectations and routines to establish a supportive environment for students. For example, students will learn how to sit at tables, independently move around the room, and use a variety of tools and resources. This is accomplished through explicit lessons, guided discovery, modeling and scaffolding to begin to build independence.

Kindergarten students come to our classrooms full of stories and information from their own lives. This unit helps students make the connection between oral language stories and the more permanent forms of drawing and writing on paper. Teachers will spend the first few sessions focusing on developing oral language skills (story telling). Developing students’ abilities to tell a story, prior to writing a story, is a crucial step in the writing process. Along with the development of storytelling, students will be taught the

foundations of sketching as a planning tool. In these early sessions, teachers will spend time teaching how to quickly sketch common shapes representing people, places, and things. Learning these techniques early on will foster independence during the early stages of writing and story telling. (See attached examples of sketching)

During this unit, writers are immersed in books and student text samples to allow for discovery and the excitement that they too can become authors. Writers will learn strategies to improve how they tell stories. They will learn to plan, make a movie in their mind, tell a story across their fingers and touch and say their story across their three-page booklets. Over the course of the unit, drawing and writing will progress from single pages to multiple page booklets. The major goal of the unit is for students to be able to generate writing ideas and use pictures and words to capture their ideas on paper. In the final two weeks of the unit, students will select one or two stories to revise and publish with an “Author Celebration.”

The essential questions for this unit of study:

- How does the writing workshop environment help students to work independently?
- How does having a plan improve writing?
- How do we communicate ideas in writing?
- How do we make our writing even better?

#### Creating Label, List, and Pattern Books Using Science Topics

Summary: In this unit, students will discover that writing can be used as a tool for learning and sharing information about science and social studies topics. Children are naturally curious about nature and they will be given opportunities to expand their background knowledge on a topic of study involving nature.

During this unit, the teacher will invite children to observe, collect, and study bits of their world. The unit focus is on writing like a scientist using the science unit “My Big Backyard,” as an anchor for mini-lessons. At the start of the unit the teacher may tell students that they’ve been writing great stories and now they will learn that there is another way to write. They can write about things they see and teach others about a topic just like a scientist might do.

A key understanding of this unit is that students can share information through both pictures and the written word. Children will be encouraged to use their knowledge of letters and sounds, as they label and list their observations. They are challenged to listen to not only the first sound, but to every sound after that. During the unit, students will be invited to write list books and eventually build upon that to create pattern books. They will even add their own opinions to their pattern books. The unit supports the idea that writing across the curriculum enhances learning about things in their world.

As part of this unit, provide some items such as zip-top baggies for students to collect items during science walks, magnifying lenses for observations, and clipboards to support writing of observations. Because this unit combines writing and science instruction the teacher will want to consider extending the amount of time spent for workshops, which will help build writing stamina for future units.

The essential questions for this unit of study:

- How do writers use pictures and words to share information?
- How do labels, lists, and patterns books help a writer share information?
- How do writers use letters and words to represent their ideas?

### Procedural Writing: How-To Books

Summary: In this unit, students will focus on a form of procedural writing called “How-to” books. As students become familiar with the books and samples used as mentor text, they will learn how to write a sequence of directions that will teach someone how to do something. Procedural writing requires explicitness, clarity, sequence, and an anticipation of what readers will need to know.

The world is filled with “procedural” writing—cookbooks, instructions for new toys and games, directions for craft projects and so on. As in the previous units, the first week will be spent examining examples of mentor text and noticing features of the genre in writing samples (see appendix). This will help to familiarize students with the structure of this genre, the expectations and possibilities. Create an opportunity outside the writing workshop time to build, cook or make something, so that the teacher can jointly construct a shared “how-to” text, capturing the steps of that process.

As students study and write using this new genre, teachers continue to build foundational skills. Continue to help children learn to sound out words, stretching them out so they can isolate and hear many sounds in a word and making marks to represent the sounds. Providing opportunities for children to be able to “reread” the books they write and continue to work with writing partners is an important part of the writing process. Once children have collection of stories, “first drafts,” have them look back through their collection and choose one or two to make even better and publish.

Kindergarten students are excited about using digital tools and “The Common Core State Standards” reminds us that they can explore these tools “*with guidance and support from adults.*” During this unit, the teacher will want to include an opportunity for students to publish using technology. For example, students can create a cover page for their writing that includes the title, author’s name, and date using a computer program such as Tux Paint or an iPad drawing application (See: scribble press or littlebirdtales.com).

The essential questions for this unit of study:

- What is the purpose of a “How-to” book?
- Where do we encounter procedural texts in the world around us?
- What is the importance of sequence and precise wording in procedural writing?

### Writing Informational Books: All-About Books

During this unit, students will be writing *All-About* books on topics of their choice. As Lucy Calkins states, “Children enter kindergarten brimming with passions and areas of expertise. There’s the child who knows everything about sharks, the child who can tell the teacher twelve million facts about princesses, the earthworm enthusiast, and the list goes on.” Our goal is to let children in on the fact that their topics are book-worthy! During this unit of study, each child will write lots of informational books about lots of different topics. The work they’ll be doing aligns with the Common Core State Standards for kindergarten, which call for students to compose “*informative/explanatory texts in which they name what they are writing about and supply some information about the topic.*”

During the first week of this unit, students will spend a few days immersed in examples of the genre. They will come to know the characteristics of an “All-about” book and notice the features of multiple texts provided by the teacher. This work will help to familiarize students with the structure, expectations and possibilities of the new writing experience.

During this unit, choose material that represent grade-level independent texts for students, well as “mentor texts” that the teacher can read aloud and referred to during the course of this unit. The teacher

will make sure that the mentor texts he/she selects will provide examples the teacher can use to teach the content of this unit. For example, the teacher will want mentor texts with tables of contents, chapter titles, and diagrams. Choose books that help teach different ways to organize student writing and also allow the teacher to demonstrate elaboration strategies that the teacher will invite students to try.

Kindergarten students are excited about using digital tools and “The Common Core State Standards” reminds us that they can explore these tools “*with guidance and support from adults.*” During this unit, the teacher will want to include an opportunity for students to publish using technology. For example, students can create an “About the Author” page using programs such as Photo Booth or the camera app on an iPad.

The essential questions for this unit of study:

- What is the purpose of an All-about book?
- What are the features of an All-About book?
- How can writers use text features to support the information they want to teach?
- How does the structure of informational text help a reader learn about the topic?

### Approximating Small Moments

Summary: This unit of study introduces students to “Small Moment” story writing. The goal is for students to become accustomed to capturing the events of their lives onto the pages of a booklet. The unit begins by supporting and building on students’ oral language to make them focused storytellers. Students will tell and write true stories from their lives and record these stories across the pages of booklets. They will use all they have learned about sketching and writing to tell about what happens first, next and last and also provide a reaction to what happened.

The first few days will be spent immersing students in read-aloud examples of the genre to provide opportunities to hear what a “small moment” story sounds like. Teachers should also model writing their own ‘small moment’ stories to provide examples of important features. This will help to familiarize students with the expectations, possibilities and structure of the genre.

Teachers will continue to reinforce strategies to sound out words, stretching them out so students can isolate and hear the sounds, and use tools such as a word wall to spell high frequency words. Teachers will encourage students to “reread” the books they write and work in partnerships to help build elaboration in their stories. After students have had a couple of weeks to write, they can look back through their collection of stories and choose one to make even better. Students can do a quick publish after a few revising and editing lessons. Final stories will be shared in a class celebration.

The essential questions for this unit of study:

- How does storytelling help students to plan their writing?
- What is a small moment story?
- Where do authors get ideas?
- How does sketching help writers to plan stories across pages?
- How do writers use sketches, letter sounds and words to write stories?
- How does a writer show that one sentence ends and another begins?

### Writing Small Moments Using Mentor Text

This unit is designed to help students continue their work with personal narrative (Small Moment) writing. The goal is for students to write true stories that have a beginning, middle and end and follow a

sequential order. This unit emphasizes certain qualities of good writing including focus, sequence, a sense of story; as well as elaboration strategies to show more detail.

As students get ready to study a second “Small Moment” unit, they will focus on the mentor author Kevin Henkes. Through this discovery work, students are invited to look closely at one writer and let that writer function as a mentor. Students will have the opportunity to be inspired by someone else’s writing and then allow that writing to impact their own. This new mentor text focus will provide reading and writing connections and help students learn some new things about the craft of writing.

The Common Core Standards requires students to explore a number of books by a favorite author and express opinions about them. In reading, students will compare and contrast characters and problems and solutions- from book to book. They will also examine some of the craft techniques that the mentor author uses. In writing workshop, they will write a small moment story emulating some new elaboration and craft techniques they have learned from their mentor author. At the conclusion of the unit, students will be encouraged to express opinions about which of the mentor texts appealed to them and why.

Teachers will continue to reinforce strategies to sound out words, stretching them out so students can isolate and hear the sounds, and use tools, such as the word walls, to help spell high frequency words. Teachers will encourage students to “reread” the books they write and work in partnerships to help build elaboration in their stories and to edit for spelling and conventions.

The essential questions for this unit of study:

- Where do authors get their ideas for the books they write?
- How do writers identify a small moment story and sequence it across several pages?
- What are the elements of a small moment story?
- How does studying a mentor author help writers?
- How does planning help writers to write better stories?
- How do writers write small moment stories with details, purpose and feelings?
- How do writers revise, publish and share their best small moment stories?



# **FIRST GRADE**

## **Reading Units of Study**

### Readers Build Good Reading Habits

Summary: The first goal of this unit is to reinforce and build on the essential reading skills that students learned in kindergarten. Teachers will use read-alouds to demonstrate comprehension skills, to discuss vocabulary and to show that we read for many purposes. Throughout the unit, the teacher will read poems, big books, fiction and nonfiction picture books and little books in various genres. It is suggested that some read-alouds also connect to science and social studies content area topics. The unit will also include many activity structures such as shared reading, small group instruction, and letter and word study. Early in this first unit, teachers will also spend time establishing rules and routines, procedures and expectations for reading time.

A second goal of the unit is to support students as they develop skills to respond to stories and informational text. As students read, they will make predictions, retell what is read, and visualize using pictures and words. As they use these strategies, they will begin to verbalize their thinking and put their thoughts in writing. In addition, they will share their opinions about books and support their thinking with evidence from the text. By the end of the unit, students will choose appropriate books and converse effectively about them.

Throughout this unit and the units that follow, foundational skills will be introduced to foster independence in reading. By engaging in daily phonemic awareness activities and letter and word study, students will learn to hear letter-sound connections and develop an awareness of how words work. The use of big books, large text poems and shared writing will provide opportunities to reinforce how words work.

The essential questions for this unit of study:

- How do we create an environment that encourages the habit of reading daily and for various purposes?
- How does understanding the “alphabetic principle” (when letters change in words, so do the sounds) improve reading?
- How can conversation and responding to text enhance comprehension?

### Readers Are Active Problem Solvers

Summary: This is a unit about using print strategies, but we never lose focus that the more students know about what they are reading, or about to read, the easier it is to figure out the unknown words. Once students think about the meaning of the text, they are more able to turn their focus toward various strategies that will help them figure out tricky words. In this unit, students will develop a variety of flexible ways to use letter-sound relationships and word parts, so they can take words apart, letter by letter or cluster by cluster, or use what they know about words to help them read new words in more challenging texts. They will also learn how to use the language structure and the meaning of the text to support their word solving. When word solving is efficient and smooth, attention is freed for deeper thinking about the text. It is common for early readers to get so caught up in decoding that they forget to pay attention to what their books are about. Instruction will aim toward greater independence for readers. They will be expected to both monitor for meaning and accuracy as they read

The essential questions for this unit of study:

- What do good readers do when they do not understand everything in a text?

- How do readers figure out words they do not know?
- How do readers apply reading strategies to improve understanding and fluency?

### Enhancing Comprehension Through Story Elements

Summary: In this unit, students will make sense of text by looking more closely at the story elements within a narrative. Students will identify the setting and the plot (events, problem, and solution) and pay close attention to what they learn about the characters. Through interaction with picture books and fairytales, students will better understand how stories are organized around these elements. The close study of story elements and key details in a text, will enhance student retellings and improve comprehension. In addition, students will work on strategies such as visualizing and inferring to help interpret the author’s message or theme of the story. As students study story elements, there will be a focus on comparing and contrasting characters and their experiences in stories. Additionally, teachers will use non-fiction texts to build background knowledge of some fiction stories. For example, before or after reading a story about a dog, the teacher may choose to read a non-fiction book about taking care of a dog.

Throughout this unit and future units, there continues to be a focus on word study, phonics and foundational skills to help students be fluent word-solvers. Big books, large print text with poetry and other writing will be used to reinforce how words work.

The essential questions for this unit of study:

- How do story elements help a reader to understand the text?
- How do readers support conclusions about characters and events?

### Reading and Enjoying Informational Text

Summary: In this unit students will learn that the purpose of reading nonfiction is to gain information about the world. Students will develop strategies to read and understand informational text using the text features of the genre as a guide to comprehension. They will examine pictures and other illustrations to gather additional information on a topic. There is a focus on determining the main topic, retelling using key details, and describing the connections between two individuals, events, ideas, or pieces of information. Students will make connections between different books on the same topic, noticing similarities and differences between the texts. Finally, students will look more closely at a text to identify the reasons an author gives to support points within the text.

The essential questions for this unit of study:

- What is the purpose of informational text?
- How do readers determine the main topic and key details within informational text?
- How do the specific features of informational text help us make meaning?

### Reading Across Genres

Summary: This unit will build upon strategies and skills students have learned this year in reading and writing workshop. Students will gather information about a topic by reading across genres. They will read poetry, fiction, and non-fiction text to examine a science related topic. The focus of the unit is ‘nature’ and this will serve as the umbrella topic from which to narrow the choices in classroom. The ‘topic’ chosen is not the focus of the unit. Teachers may select any science related topic, as long as it can be used for the teaching points suggested.

During the study, students will identify basic similarities and differences between two or more texts on the same topic. They will examine illustrations, descriptions, and procedures contained within the texts. They will learn that authors write for different purposes and that different types of text can provide

information on the same topic. Students will be reading and responding to their reading, while using examples from the text to justify their thinking. The comprehension strategies of visualizing and making inferences will be a focus to deepen comprehension. In addition, students will learn how to use what they know about how words work to employ more advanced decoding strategies.

The essential questions for this unit of study:

- How do readers figure out words they do not know?
- How do readers apply reading strategies to improve understanding and fluency?
- How do readers deepen their understanding of a text?

## **FIRST GRADE**

### **Writing Units of Study**

#### Launching With Small Moments

Summary: This first writing unit will help establish the habits and procedures of the writing workshop while also building on the understanding of the narrative ‘small moment’ genre explored in kindergarten. The term “small moment stories” is used to define a story that refers to a time when you did something or something happened. As students write their “Small Moment” stories, they will be choosing topics and planning and writing story events in sequence. They will also learn new strategies for developing a topic, planning and writing a story, and revising for meaning and elaboration by adding pictures and words. As students explore new vocabulary, they will also become more independent in using both conventional and ‘inventive’ spelling when writing. Throughout this unit, students will build stamina to sustain writing for longer periods of time. They will also be introduced to the idea of working with a writing partner to help them verbalize and clarify their ideas.

The essential questions for this unit of study:

- How do we create a workshop environment that fosters lifelong writers?
- How do writers use their own lives to generate topics?
- How can planning a story orally and pictorially help develop a sense of beginning, middle, and end?
- How do writers add elaboration about characters and events?
- How and why do writers revise and edit their stories?

#### Open Writing Cycle- Punctuation Study

Summary: In this two-week unit, students will have an opportunity to choose the genre they would like to write. For example, they might consider if they want to teach someone how to do something (How-to) or write about “A time when...” in a small moment story. This will give teachers an opportunity to observe the decision making process and what their students have learned about the structures and qualities of writing in the genres that have already been taught during this current year and the previous grade. The focus of this short unit will not be a fully revised published piece of writing.

The focus of this unit is end punctuation. The emphasis is that punctuation at the end of a sentence helps us read writing more easily and is something authors make choices about. All of our units of study require discussions and teaching about punctuation, but this unit will provide an opportunity to focus on the fact that authors make decisions about the type of punctuation they use. This will not be a “genre study” unit and the celebration will be less about the finished piece and more about what students have discovered and utilized as punctuation decisions. There are lessons in the resource in *Practical Punctuation* by Dan Feigelson, and these can be used, in their entirety, or in part, as a guide in this study.

The essential questions for this unit of study:

- Why have punctuation marks?
- How do writers make their stories easy to read?
- How does punctuation influence the way a reader understands?

### Procedural Writing: How-To

Summary: This unit of study focuses on writing ‘How-to’ explanatory texts. Students will learn that there is a common structure to this genre and that procedural writing requires explicitness, clarity, and sequence. The students will learn how to generate ideas for writing by thinking of procedures that they ‘expertly’ know. They will become adept at choosing a procedure, planning the text, and getting it down in drawings and words. According to the Common Core State Standards, it is important that students learn to include an introduction in which they name their topic, as well as a closure that ties it all together. Some time will be spent teaching students how to revise the “procedures” sections to clearly convey the writer’s sequence of instruction. Students will share their books with others in order to determine clarity of message. Throughout this unit students will become more independent writers building stamina to sustain writing for longer periods of time on topic.

The essential questions for this unit of study:

- What are some examples of “How to” writing in the world?
- How do writers clearly explain procedural steps to readers?
- How can writers use drawings and diagrams to enhance the clarity of the directions?

### Information Writing: “All About” Science and Social Studies Topics

Summary: During this unit of study, writers will create informational (“All-About”) books using topics related to the first grade science and/or social studies curriculum. They will generate ideas for writing by choosing a science/social studies topics that is of interest and of which they have some knowledge. There are two important concepts that are stressed during this unit. First, students will recognize that there is a specific structure to this informational writing. Second, students will understand that informational books are used to provide information and teach others. Writers will develop strategies for choosing a topic, planning their book, and getting their ideas down in pictures and words. They will be reading books about their topic and sharing some new information in their writing. During the unit, some time will be spent revising books for meaning and clarity. Throughout this unit, students will become more independent writers building stamina to sustain writing for longer periods of time.

The essential questions for this unit of study:

- How does understanding the structure of a genre help you to write a focused piece?
- How do writers use what they know about a topic to teach others through writing?
- How do writers use reading to enhance their writing?
- How and why do writers revise and edit their writing?

### Writing Small Moments Using Mentor Texts

Summary: This unit of study revisits writing in the narrative structure as introduced in the launching unit. Now we will use “Mentor Texts” to develop new strategies to improve the quality of student writing. To meet the Common Core State Standards, students need to write in a sequential manner and also need to include what a character felt and respond to what he/she did. Through the study of a mentor author, students will learn to “say more” through elaboration techniques while reinforcing the structure of the narrative genre. First, students will listen to mentor texts to understand about the characters. Next, they will return to these well-loved books to read them “through the eyes of a writer” and thereby strengthen the reading-writing connection. The teacher will guide students through looking across multiple writing techniques with one author and focusing in on one type of writing technique with multiple authors.

While writing, students will review and develop new techniques for choosing a topic, planning a story, and getting their thoughts down in pictures and words. They will write “Small Moment” stories with an additional focus on elaboration and making purposeful craft decisions. Time will be spent on teaching students how to create a stronger beginning and a more developed closure to their stories. Students will work with writing partners to revise meaning and details and apply editing strategies. Since this will be the final narrative unit of study, it is important that we support adding "punctuation on the run" (not as an after-thought but throughout the writing process) by thinking aloud in shared writing experiences. In addition to meeting the rigors of the common core, a 4-5 page booklet with approximately one paragraph per page will be the expectation.

The essential questions for this unit of study:

- How does focusing on an author as a mentor help improve the writer?
- How does understanding the structure of a genre help you to write a focused piece?
- How do writers use feelings, actions and senses to add details and “stretch” their stories?
- How do writers vary their word choice to help convey meaning?
- How do writers revise and edit their stories to make them clear and readable?

### Persuasive Writing (Opinion)

Summary: This unit focuses on having children create persuasive letters about a topic of their choice. The students will learn how to generate ideas for writing by choosing topics based upon a want or a desire to change something. The key understanding is that “persuasive letters” are prompting the reader to take action. Students will recognize the structure of a persuasive letter and develop strategies for choosing a topic, planning their letter, and getting it down in words. Students will be able to introduce a topic, state an opinion, give a reason for that opinion and provide a sense of closure. Some time will be spent revising and editing letters to make them readable for their intended audience. Students will be able to share their letters, via mail or hand delivery, to their audience.

The essential questions for this unit of study:

- What is an opinion?
- What is the structure of persuasive letter writing?
- How do writers persuade others to take action through letter writing?
- How and why do writers revise and edit their writing?

## **SECOND GRADE**

### **Reading Units of Study**

#### Taking Charge of Our Reading- Fiction and Nonfiction Text

Summary: The important work of the unit is a review and further strengthening of strategies for solving tricky words, while also encouraging students to check for understanding of what they are reading. Teachers will review strategies that may have been forgotten from the previous year and teach more sophisticated strategies that will help them read more challenging books. There will be a dual focus on both decoding of tricky words, that may often be multi-syllabic, and strategies for using context to build vocabulary. This requires students to read with divided attention to both words and meaning.

We want all readers to be active problem solvers. An active problem solver is one who notices when something does not look right, sound right or make sense and does something to fix it. Teachers should encourage and celebrate active, resourceful word-solving strategies. Teaching strategies for dealing with unknown and tricky words will continue throughout every unit. This unit sets the tone that it is an important skill and one that we will come back to again and again.

The essential questions for this unit of study:

- How do we create an environment that encourages the habit of reading daily and for various purposes?
- What strategies do good readers employ to develop fluency with words?
- How do readers apply reading strategies to construct meaning?
- How can discussion increase our knowledge and understanding of an idea(s)?

#### Diving Deeper into Stories Through Characters

Summary: In this unit students explore the genre of fiction and draw special attention to the story characters. Students will think closely about the characters in their books and the kinds of things they want and the kinds of troubles they have. They will make predictions about their characters based on the behaviors the characters exhibit. They will discuss their actions and how these relate to their character traits. They will retell stories and talk about the overall journey their characters take over time. Students will think more closely about character's traits and feelings by finding examples in the text of when those traits are driving the character's actions or if the character is acting unusual. Students will look closely at characters' feelings by tracking the characters' changing emotions. This unit will also help readers to understand we don't just learn about our characters—that in fact authors often write about characters to help us learn about the world and even ourselves. This will lead to the understanding that characters can teach us about our own feelings and the world. Finally, students will be reading with more stamina as they hold on to longer texts with confidence.

The essential questions for this unit of study:

- How do readers identify character's traits and formulate thoughts and opinions about them?
- How does visualizing deepen our understanding of a text?
- How can discussion increase our knowledge and understanding of an idea(s)?

#### Experiencing Life Through Nonfiction

Summary: In this unit, students will read nonfiction books of interest and will learn that these texts help them to become smarter about the world they live in. Readers will learn strategies to read actively, pausing as they read to reflect and jot about what they have read and understood. They will ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding and learn to identify the main topic, supporting details and key vocabulary as they read. Additionally, they will focus on the purpose of a text, identifying what the author is trying to describe, explain or answer.

This unit will also focus on text features such as bold type, subheadings, glossaries and indices, to demonstrate how these features help a reader locate information efficiently. In addition, there will be a focus on using text structure to compare and contrast topics and information across different text to deepen understanding. Students will have many opportunities to share information through discussion and written response.

The essential questions for this unit of study:

- How do readers use nonfiction text to explore the world?
- How do readers use text features and text supports to generate questions and predictions?
- How do compare and contrast strategies help readers of non fiction draw logical conclusions and ideas about the world?
- How do readers of non-fiction hold onto new information as they read and put it together to form opinions about what they are learning?
- How can discussion increase our knowledge and understanding of an idea(s)?

### Reading Folktales, Fairytales and Fables

Summary: In this unit, readers will spend time reading folktales, fairy tales and fables. These are stories with morals and characters that have clearly defined, often exaggerated traits. This “narrative” genre allows students to explore how folktales, fairy tales and fables compare to the modern-day stories they read. Readers make inferences about characters’ roles and how their roles impact the story’s bigger meaning. Readers critique and analyze different folktales, fairy tales and fables from diverse cultures, to determine the stories central message, lesson or moral. They will also discuss what the author wants the reader to learn based on the lessons and morals the stories convey. As students study the plot structure, they will compare and contrast the similarities and differences between folktales, fairy tales, fables and fiction. In addition, they will compare and contrast two or more versions of the same story, by different authors and from different cultures. Readers will also make connections between similar stories and share their perspectives of the story’s events by providing evidence of thinking.

The essential questions for this unit of study:

- How does a fairy tale, fable or folktale differ from other types of stories?
- How does comparing and contrasting fairy tales, fables or folktales help the reader understand modern day stories better?
- How does reading dialogue aloud help readers understand a character’s point of view?
- How does ‘role-playing’ help readers understand a character’s response to major events and challenges?
- How can the reader use strategies to recognize the lesson learned or moral of the story?
- How does writing and discussion text improve comprehension?
- How does the study of word choice and organization help to improve comprehension?





### Authors as Mentors: Reading and Writing

Summary: In this unit, students will read and study the craft of a mentor author in order to apply craft possibilities to their own narrative writing. As readers study a mentor author, they will notice the author's writing style and craft choices, and focus on what the author does to make his/her writing as strong as possible. Students will write, revise and edit stories to reflect some of the craft possibilities they have learned. The study of mentor authors will allow writers to make more powerful and thoughtful revisions. During this unit, students will write small moment stories and apply all they have learned about elaboration, leads, endings and craft decisions.

The essential questions for this unit of study:

- How does having a favorite author help a reader and a writer?
- What can writers learn from other authors?
- How can discussion be an integral part of the writing process?
- How do readers apply reading strategies, such as inference and visualization, to construct meaning?
- How do illustrations support an author's words and deepen understanding?
- How can readers use punctuation clues to help navigate a text?
- How can reading various authors help to build vocabulary?

### Nonfiction: Reading As a Researcher

Summary: In this nonfiction unit, students will read and write about the science curriculum content area of 'Life Cycle of the Butterfly.' Alongside the reading unit, students will think about what they are learning in science and compare and contrast that with what they're learning from the books they are reading on that topic. During this unit study, the teacher will model collecting information and asking questions and gathering evidence to support new thinking. As a group, students will be expected to describe the connections between a series of scientific ideas related to their study of butterflies. As the unit progresses, students will participate in shared research around this topic. They will learn that writing can be used as a tool for both learning and communicating. The unit is a hybrid of reading, writing and exploration of a science topic and that means it will look different than the regular writing workshops. Envision that students will be reading, writing and learning about science each day of the study.

In addition to the whole class study of butterflies, students will be reading other informational books on various topics, comparing and contrasting information from different texts, recording interesting information, collecting questions and finally, writing to teach others about their topics. During reading, students will explore text structures to compare and contrast information and examine text features to assist in making sense of information and deepen comprehension. They will identify the main topic, supporting details and pay attention to key vocabulary. They will continue to develop strategies to read and understand informational texts and determine what information is important or less important. This work will be accomplished during, shared, guided and independent reading.

The essential questions for this unit of study:

- How can reading a variety of books on specific topic help a reader become an expert on that topic?
- How does what you know help you understand new information?
- How do text features and characteristics of nonfiction text help readers learn new information?
- How do readers identify, interpret and record important information from nonfiction texts?
- How can discussion increase our knowledge and understanding of an idea(s)?

- How does informational writing differ from other genres?
- How is discussion an integral part of the writing process?
- How do readers use text and text features to understand content specific vocabulary?

## **SECOND GRADE**

### **Writing Units of Study**

#### Opening Writing Cycle: Punctuation Study

In this two-week unit, students will have an opportunity to choose the genre they would like to write.

For example, they might consider if they want to teach someone how to do something (How-to), write about “A time when...” in a small moment story or write an opinion piece. This will give teachers an opportunity to observe the decision making process and what their students have learned about the structures and qualities of writing in the genres that have already been taught. The focus of this short unit will not be a fully revised published piece of writing.

The main focus of this study is on end punctuation. Students were introduced to the different types of end punctuation in first grade. Still, because ending punctuation is something that we would like students to do while writing, as opposed to an editing after-thought, it is important for teachers to revisit this topic in order to emphasize its importance. Students should be held responsible for choosing appropriate punctuation. “It is mandatory to use end punctuation when a sentence is finished, but authors decide whether to make it a question mark or finish with an exclamation point” (Feigelson, p.7). The focus is that punctuation at the end of a sentence helps us read writing more easily and is something authors make choices about.

The essential questions for this unit of study:

- Why have punctuation marks?
- How can writers use punctuation to express more clearly what they have to say?
- How does punctuation influence the way a reader understands?
- How do writers decide what punctuation to use to convey their message?

#### Opinion Unit: The Power of Reviews

Summary: Young writers find it easy to give their opinions, and they can be very persuasive when speaking with others. They give their opinions about books they read, places they visit, movies they watch, and video games they play. This unit will invite students to write reviews that provide an opinion and use reasons to help persuade others to agree with their viewpoint. During the first week of the unit, students will spend time reading reviews of books, movies, restaurants and popular tourist locations. They will discover what is generally included in a review. In addition, they will determine what makes reviews interesting and compelling so that they can use these same elements in their own writing.

As students write and revise their reviews, they will need to consider their audience; introduce the topic they are writing about; state an opinion; supply reasons that support their opinion and use specialized vocabulary and linking words to connect their opinion and the reasons to back it up. Finally, writers will pull everything together by providing a concluding statement.

The essential questions for this unit of study:

- How can writers use writing to convince others that their opinions are worthy of consideration?
- How can writers express and support their opinions in writing?
- How can writers make their writing easy to read?
- How will discussion an integral part of the process for writing persuasive text?

### Informational Writing- I'm An Expert!

Summary: In this unit, students begin by writing on a variety of topics about the world around them. They will select topics they know a lot about from their daily lives, showing they have some personal “expertise on a topic.” The goal of the unit is for writers to be a classroom “authority” on one subject and write about that subject, developing points and using elaboration strategies. During the unit writers will shift from writing many books across topics to writing deeply about one or two expert topics. Writers will produce an informational/explanatory text that will introduce a topic, use information and facts that are predictable and specific, use definitions to develop points, and provide a concluding statement. Research during this unit is limited to resources in the classroom. Most of the writing is based on students’ prior knowledge about a topic. Writers will organize books using table of contents, chapter headings and sub-topics. Writers will expand their skill of writing informational text while building on “All-About” and “How-to” units learned in previous grades. During the unit, they will present their informational text as a means to teach others.

The essential questions for this unit of study:

- How can writers use mentor text to study the characteristics of informational writing?
- How can writers choose topics by considering areas of expertise and their audience?
- How can writers plan and draft their information in organized ways?
- How do writers use nonfiction features in their informational writing?
- How do writers use vocabulary to help readers understand their topics?
- How can writers re-read and revise using elaboration strategies to increase the amount of information they give?
- How can writers prepare to publish by revising and editing?

### Realistic Fiction: Lifting the Level of Writing

Summary: This writing unit introduces the genre of realistic fiction. Students have been reading fiction stories about characters, problems, and plot for years. Now, they will take everything they have learned about fiction and write their own well-elaborated, short stories. Students’ writing will contain realistic characters (children close to their age), a setting, and a conflict or realistic problem (things that could happen to them).

Drawing on realistic fiction mentor text and real-life experiences, students will generate a variety of realistic story ideas. One main focus is to help students understand that they are not writing a personal narrative about themselves but rather inventing a story and characters that could be real. Students will use elaboration strategies they have learned from other units and will be introduced to some new techniques, such as using temporal words, to help the writer move the story through time.

The essential questions for this unit of study:

- In what ways are characters and problems based on real life?
- How does planning help the writer create scenes that move the reader through the story?

- How do writers revisit the qualities of good writing to develop believable fiction pieces?
- How do writers revise to add details?
- How do rules of language affect communication?

## THIRD – FIFTH GRADE UNITS OF STUDY: AN OVERVIEW



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### PREPARING FOR STANDARDIZED TESTS

Students in grades 3-5 take standardized State tests.

The best preparation for standardized tests is to teach students to be stronger readers and writers **all year**. In reading, they need to tackle stamina, volume and comprehension to build their reading muscles. In writing, they practice responding to prompts, using knowledge of genre characteristics and elements of good writing.

**Throughout the year**, readers have built stamina in both the amount of time they read and the length of text that they read within the genres of fiction and nonfiction. In addition, students have built a repertoire of comprehension strategies that are specific to each genre. Students will learn to transfer and apply all that they know about reading, to reading test passages and answering test questions.

In writing, students have gained knowledge about the characteristics of various genres and have had many opportunities to write within each genre. Students will learn to differentiate between types of writing prompts and respond appropriately about topics not of their own choice.

The pacing guide for each State-tested grade level allows for about **one week of official test prep**. The remainder of the time, teachers are embedding “standardized-test-like-activities” within the other units, throughout the school year.

Because we know that there are some essential differences between reading and writing in a standardized test environment, the following questions are considered as we prepare students to take tests.

#### Reading

- What is the difference between test reading and real reading?
- How does knowing the genre of the passage determine the strategies used for comprehension?
- How do readers apply their knowledge of reading strategies to test taking?
- Which strategies are most effective for analyzing multiple-choice questions?
- What strategies help readers determine main idea from supporting details?
- What strategies help readers determine correct responses to open-ended questions?

#### Writing

- What is the difference between test writing and real writing?
- What clues help students identify the types of writing prompts on a test?
- How can students plan quickly and effectively when responding to a test prompt?
- What strategies help writers determine responses to open-ended questions?

## THIRD GRADE

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### Reading Units of Study

#### Launching Experienced Readers

Summary: The first unit of the year has two goals. One goal is to establish an environment in which readers know what is expected of them. Rules, procedures, and expectations for behavior are modeled and implemented. Students learn how to choose appropriately leveled books and to keep track of their reading. There will also be a focus on building reading stamina and volume during this early unit. It is important for teachers to spend time stressing the importance of reading stamina by encouraging students to read for longer stretches of time- at home and at school. “Research tells us that students need to be reading ‘just right’ books two hours a day (home and school and across content areas) to maintain one year’s growth.” Calkins 2011.

A second goal of the unit is to remind students of all that they know about thinking deeply about characters and story. They will notice the big events of a story, and the character development, using the strategy of inferring to make predictions about both. Most importantly, students will learn the importance of conversation to develop thinking about books and informational text. Through a read-aloud experience, students will develop their ability to think, talk and write about their reading.

The essential questions for this unit of study:

- How do we create a workshop environment that fosters lifelong readers?
- How do readers figure out words they do not know and apply word structure and vocabulary skills to comprehend texts?
- How do readers use their reading strategies in fiction and nonfiction?
- How does thinking about the author’s purpose and message deepen understanding?
- How can conversation and responding to text enhance reading experiences?

#### Nonfiction Genre Study

Summary: This unit will immerse students in the exploration and study of nonfiction/informational texts. Readers will employ strategies to read with increased clarity, depth, and power. Reciprocal teaching strategies will continue to be reinforced as critical reading strategies for comprehension. Students will learn the most important skills and habits that are essential to readers of expository nonfiction: determining importance, finding the main ideas and supporting details, and questioning and talking back to the text. Knowing how to use text features and the language of nonfiction, in an integrated way, will enable readers to acquire, summarize and use information.

One focus of the unit is for students to learn strategies for “accessing” a text before reading. Students will be expected to activate their background knowledge about a subject and preview the text, including diagrams and pictures, and new words, to get ready to read. They will determine the main idea of the text, monitor their comprehension, and discuss and write about what they have learned. They will also continue to keep a “Reader’s Notebook” to provide a place to respond to reading of both fiction and non-fiction text. Teachers should gather groups of nonfiction text, at independent levels (easier to read) to be used in addition to guided reading books.

The essential questions for this unit of study:

- How do text features and characteristics of informational text influence a reader’s interpretation?
- What strategies do I use to make sure I understand and retain information from reading?
- How does questioning help the reader understand the text?
- How does identifying main idea and supporting details help the reader to understand and retain information?
- How can I increase my reading/writing vocabulary through wide reading, word study and content area study?

### Following Characters Into Meaning

Summary: Students in grades K-2 focused on identifying characters, getting to know their traits, their families, friendships and some of their problems. Third graders will be doing more “advanced” character work as they read in the narrative genre. This is not just a unit on characters, but also a unit on those “reading skills” that will allow readers to think deeply about characters. An early focus calls on students to get to know the characters in their books through paying attention to the kind of person their main character is and developing empathy by “walking in the character’s shoes.” As a reader develops a deeper understanding of who a character is, they will begin to predict what that character might do next. During these lessons, readers will sharpen and apply their predicting, envisioning and inference skills. Students will study how their characters change over time and as the Common Core State Standards requires, students will, “Describe characters in a story (e.g. their traits, motivations, or feeling) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events.” Students will be required to do close reading and inference work to uncover the thoughts and feelings of their characters. Finally, they will also determine what lessons the characters in their novels are learning and decide if they have learned lessons as well.

The essential questions for this unit of study:

- How do readers get to know a character?
- How do readers make logical predictions about characters?
- What do a character’s actions, feelings, and thoughts tell us about a character?
- What does it mean to “stand in the character’s shoes?”
- How does the person telling the story impact the way we understand what is happening?
- How does inferring help us learn more about a character?

### Narrative Nonfiction

Summary: In this unit, students continue to develop their understanding of nonfiction text. During this narrative nonfiction study, texts read and discussed are written as stories, read cover to cover, and focus on nonfiction content. Narrative nonfiction focuses on important people in sports, history, scientific figures or animal characters. Cactus Hotel (unit mentor text) is an example of “creative” narrative nonfiction; biographies and memoirs are examples of narrative nonfiction about people; texts about the Titanic or the discovery of electricity, written as stories, are also examples of narrative nonfiction. Informational articles can also be represented in this genre. These articles, and many biographies, are often about people that have overcome a disaster in their life or achieved great success. In all instances, unlike fiction, students will read narrative nonfiction expecting to learn something new about the subject or the character involved.

“Using nonfiction texts written as stories, such as biography, will allow the teacher and students to transition between fiction (story elements) and nonfiction (information). The structure of the text influences the way a reader reads a text. We read differently when a text is structured to organize to advance ideas, with information divided into compartments-and when a text is organized to tell a story. Nonfiction texts can be either- or both, combining both expository and narrative structures. The reader

needs to ask, “What sort of text is this?” and then adjust his or her reading accordingly.” (*A Guide to Teaching Nonfiction Writing*, Stead/Hoyt)



The essential questions for this unit of study:

- How is narrative nonfiction different from nonfiction?
- How might readers use what is familiar about story structure to read narrative non-fiction?
- How does a reader determine which information is important to remember from the text?
- How can a reader use evidence or examples from the text to support ideas?
- How do text features and characteristics of informational text influence a reader's interpretation?
- What strategies do readers use to make sure they understand and retain information from reading?
- How does identifying main idea and key details help the reader to understand and retain information?
- How can readers increase their reading/writing vocabulary through wide reading, word study and content area study?

### Once Upon a Time

Summary: In this unit, students will return to the earlier study of fiction and focus on developing ideas about characters and plot in fairy tales. During this study, students will read closely, inferring about information in the text to grow theories about story characters. Readers will build theories by noticing a character's actions, both *what* a character does and also *how* the character does these things. They will also pay attention to the way characters talk and the words they choose, their tone of voice, and the emotional cues the author adds to dialogue. Readers will read with new theories in mind, altering them according to new information. Additionally, they will distinguish their own point of view from that of the narrator or those of the characters. Finally, students will read fairy tales from different cultures and compare and contrast and analyze story elements, characters and character traits.

A Note about Fairy Tales: Fairy tales are part of the Folktales genre. They often begin with "Once upon a time..." or "Long, long ago..." These stories also include magic or something enchanted. The setting is often a forest or castle. Fairy tales have characters that are good and bad (evil) and include a problem that is solved with the characters "living happily ever after".

The essential questions for this unit of study:

- How is a character impacted by other characters, the plot, setting or culture?
- How do a character's motivations, actions and feelings contribute or influence the sequence of events?
- How does a story's theme change from one culture/country to another?
- How would the Cinderella fairy tale or another fairy tale change if a different character told the story?
- How does a text's illustrations enhance what is conveyed by the text's words?

## **THIRD GRADE**

### **Writing Units of Study**

#### Launching the Writing Workshop

This unit of study is designed to launch a writing workshop where students can work with engagement and independence. Teachers should review rituals, structures and routines of the workshop, so that students can get started writing without a great deal of support from the teacher. This unit will reinforce that writing is a process that helps writers collect ideas and produce multiple entries and drafts. The big difference for students this year will be the introduction of the writing notebook. Third grade is the first experience writing in a notebook instead of across pages in a booklet.

Students will learn to spend time in their notebook collecting ideas, writing “blurbs” and working to develop the ideas using timelines and sketches, prior to writing drafts. They will also try out different leads for their drafts and decide how best to begin and end a specific narrative. All of this writing will happen in the notebook where students will learn to develop a seed idea. From there, students will draft stories outside the notebook.

In addition, students will learn to improve the quality of personal narrative writing. Students learn strategies to focus in on a small moment, to make a movie in their minds, and to write clearly. They will determine the heart of the story and organize a clear event sequence that unfolds naturally using exact details and specific words. Students use some dialogue and descriptions of actions, thoughts, feelings, and responses to further develop experiences and events. In addition, grammar discussions and instruction will begin during this first unit. The “on-demand” writing assessment will provide information about how students are using conventions of usage and provide a window into the grammatical confusions that exist.

The essential questions for this unit of study:

- How do writers generate topics for writing?
- How do writers effectively tell their stories?
- How do writers improve their writing?
- How do I use the rules of written language so that I communicate clearly?

#### Raising the Quality of Narrative Writing

This unit of study will expand students’ abilities to write well-organized, focused narrative stories. Instruction is designed to reinforce the structure of the genre as well as enhance the quality of writing through elaboration, craft, and a focus on meaning and significance. Students will plan key events and develop the important part, or the heart, of their stories. Students will utilize a writer’s notebook and generate notebook entries that evoke longer, more meaningful, and more powerful stories. When they write stories, they will focus on the important part and zoom in on that part, use quotation marks effectively, and create a balance of elaboration through the use of dialogue, action, narration, and thoughts (DANT). After crafting strong leads, students will also be challenged to create strong endings that resolve a problem, reach a goal, or demonstrate that the author learned a lesson. They will reread their stories for clarity and meaning and for the effective use of words and phrases. Editing will involve checking for capitalization, punctuation and spelling.

As students move through the writing process, writing conferences/small group instruction will be differentiated based on individual needs. This means that teaching points may come from whole group mini-lessons, small group instruction or during one-to-one conferences. As a way to differentiate instruction for writers the teacher may have four “Qualities of Good Writing” groups in class: a structure

group, an elaboration group, a craft group, meaning/significance group, and from time to time, a conventions group based on formative assessments.

The essential questions for this unit of study:

- How do writers generate more sophisticated topics for writing?
- How do writers effectively tell their true stories?
- How do writers raise the quality of their writing?
- How do writer’s use mentor text for writing ideas and craft possibilities?
- How do I use the rules of written language so that I communicate clearly?

### Realistic Fiction

Summary: Third graders begin the year writing personal narratives and now continue to write in the familiar narrative structure, this time using their life experiences to create realistic fiction stories. They will learn to imagine stories from ordinary moments, create believable characters, and create a realistic situation for those characters to go through. Realistic fiction stories will require students to apply the same qualities of writing they have learned in previous narrative writing.

Continued study of mentor texts will remain a focus for writers, as they use the work of published authors to begin to envision ideas for their own story scenes and characters. Students will plan out their ideas in a more concrete manner, utilizing a story mountain to build tension and to sequence events logically. A turning point will be developed within each story, as writers try to see the story through the eyes of their characters. This work will also help students envision an appropriate resolution to their story.

During the gathering and drafting stages, students are expected to write longer texts than they have in the past. A goal of this unit is to get students to enhance their stories by bringing characters to life through the use of DANT techniques (dialogue, action, narration and thoughts). To achieve writing that is organized, students will need to spend more time planning and rehearsing in the early stages of the cycle. In addition, they need to increase the volume of their writing, so writers will be expected to generate many entries in their notebooks. Students are excited about “making up stories” so they are ready for more advanced and challenging revision strategies. It is also time to expect that writers should produce more than one draft from their notebook entries. Although it is not necessary to publish two drafts, both drafts will serve as practice opportunities for “trying out” new strategies.

The essential questions for this unit of study:

- What is a story?
- Where do ideas for writing come from?
- What organizational strategies make writing easy to follow?
- How do great storytellers hook and hold their readers?
- How do writers balance dialogue, action narration and thinking?
- How to writers revise to raise the quality of their drafts?

### Personal Opinion Essays

Summary: In this unit writers will create a “Personal Opinion Essay,” that will allow them to use their own writing to persuade others to believe what they themselves believe. Each student will write a personal essay in which he or she brings forth a theme of personal significance and creates an argument for it. Writing will include a thesis statement, reasons to support the opinion, linking words and phrases and a concluding statement or section. Writers will need ample scaffolding and support to build their essay muscles. Teachers need to allow time during the first week to examine samples of the genre and for

students to generate many writing pieces. A large portion of this unit will be spent teaching about the structure of the essay genre.

In the coming weeks, writing conferences and small group instruction will be differentiated based on students' individual needs. This means that teaching point in a one-on-one conference or small group might not match that day's whole group mini-lesson. As a way to differentiate instruction for writers, the teacher may have four-five 'Qualities of Good Writing' groups in class: a structure group, an elaboration group, a craft group, meaning/significance group, and possibly a conventions group based on their writing ability. Whole group lessons usually focus on structure and elaboration. The format of each writing lesson should be the following: Connection, Teaching Point, Teaching, Active Involvement, and Link. Writers need to do a 5-minute quick edit daily. The teacher may want to create a daily "Quick Edit" checklist for writers to use.

The essential questions for this unit of study:

- How are essays organized?
- How can writers generate ideas for personal opinion essays?
- How can writers generate and support a thesis statement?
- How can writers use introductions, transitions, and conclusions to bring cohesion in a personal essay?

## FOURTH GRADE

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### Reading Units of Study

#### Launching for Experienced Readers

Summary: This first unit has a dual focus. First, teachers will help establish a reading environment in which readers know what is expected of them. They will reinforce with lessons and discussions to help students choose appropriate books and converse effectively about them. Teachers will introduce rules, procedures, and expectations for behavior. There is also a focus on building students' stamina and quantity of reading, as they also reflect on the amount and types of reading they do. At the beginning of the year, teachers need to spend time stressing the importance of stamina by encouraging kids to read for longer stretches of time- at home and at school. Throughout the year, teachers will be helping students to build capacity to read more complex texts. The Common Core Standards state that, "Students will, by the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poetry, in the grades 4-5 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range."

The second focus of the unit will involve building cohesion and understanding of questioning and developing theories around a text. Using a read-aloud, teachers will model a repertoire of meaning-making strategies, thinking deeply about characters and their motivations, and how to effectively discuss theories and write about thinking.

The essential questions for this unit of study:

- How do we create a workshop environment that fosters lifelong readers?
- How can discussion increase our knowledge and understanding of ideas?
- What do readers do when they do not understand everything in a text?
- How do readers write about reading?
- How do readers use their reading strategies in fiction and nonfiction?

#### Following Characters into Meaning

Summary: This unit focuses on how we grow our understanding of the characters in a story. Students will be asked to think deeply about their characters- making inferences, building theories and learning life lessons. In part one of this unit, students will use the skills of envisioning and prediction, to see the world through the eyes of the character. Readers are asked to draw on textual evidence, in the form of specific details and examples, to support their ideas about characters' motivations. Students will keep notes about their reactions and reflections to help with deeper analysis of characters.

In part two of the unit, readers will look at characters in a more objective way. They will notice characters' personality quirks and habits. This will challenge students to think critically and make inferences to develop ideas about characters' traits, personalities, motivations, troubles, changes and patterns of behavior. As students keep notes about their observations, they will engage in deep analysis and reflection about their predictions and their changing views on the characters being studied. Readers will explore what a character cares about, character complexity, and how secondary characters help readers to understand the main character. This work will help readers develop inferences, interpretations, and grow in their abilities to talk and write about their reading.

Finally, students will learn to draw on text evidence and synthesize information to be more perceptive and accurate at anticipating events. They will anticipate what will happen next, how characters will react, and be more able to account for surprising turns in plot. Once students have experienced this work, they will

be directed to compare characters across books, thinking about characters that play similar roles, and comparing and contrasting how characters react in different ways.

The essential questions for this unit of study:

- How do readers develop theories about characters?
- How does the author's choice of point of view impact the reader's understanding of characters?
- How does understanding the theme of a story deepen the reader's understanding of the text?
- How can readers use the text to make inferences, draw conclusions and develop theories about the character?
- How can readers support their answers using textual information and/or prior knowledge?

#### Navigating Nonfiction: Determining Importance and Synthesizing

Summary: Becoming proficient readers of nonfiction helps to enrich lives with information and ideas and is the genre that readers encounter most often in their lives. Therefore, in fourth grade students need to develop the skills and strategies that will help them to navigate through dense nonfiction text, identify and link important facts, and develop these facts into concepts. Emphasis is placed on learning to identify main ideas and supporting details and to summarize and determine the importance of what is read. Students will also learn to shift between details and bigger ideas by differentiating between the main idea and details of a paragraph and the overarching idea of a whole article. The ability to synthesize information, through peer teaching and the use of multiple texts on the same topic, will enable students to merge text information and expand their thinking.

It is important that students are immersed in the genre to be studied. This is an opportunity for the students to become familiar with many forms of nonfiction, such as articles, letters, and biographies, in addition to the standard expository nonfiction. As with previous units of study, teachers will read-aloud a variety of nonfiction texts. This provides the opportunity to teach strategies through science and social studies topics that are studied concurrently with this reading unit. As teachers model through a read-aloud, students will activate prior knowledge, tackle difficult words, discern main ideas and supporting details, and synthesize information. These strategies can be modeled during whole class instruction and then pulled into guided reading to develop proficiency, and independent reading to provide practice opportunities.

The essential questions for this unit of study:

- How do readers use text features and text structures to understand and interpret informational texts?
- How does the strategy of questioning propel readers forward?
- How does identifying main idea and supporting details help the reader to understand and retain information?
- How can readers synthesize information (put the pieces together) to make new meaning?
- Why is it important to read multiple sources on a topic to build understanding?
- How does reading both primary and secondary sources contribute to new understandings?
- How can I increase my reading/writing vocabulary through reading across genres, word study and content area study?
- How can discussion, and writing about reading, increase our knowledge and understanding of an idea?

#### Stories Across Time: Myths and Fables

Summary: America is a melting pot of various cultures and each of the cultures has produced a myth or fable to help explain something about the beliefs of people at various times in history. While studying this

genre, students will see that myths and fables are, in many ways, the antecedents of the stories they read today. People have always tried to make sense of their world. They wondered about volcanoes and the changes of the moon and in the absence of a scientific explanation for the mystery, they invented stories to explain why things occurred. Also, people have always tried to warn others about excesses in behavior and stories have been a natural way to make a point.

In the first part of the unit, students will read myths that represent different cultures. Myths can take many forms but this unit will focus on two, cautionary myths and myths that explain how things came to be. Students will have opportunities to learn, analyze and discuss the characteristics of myths, the reasons for their creation, and some of the moral questions they present.

The second part of the unit will focus on fables. Fables are short narratives that use animal characters with human features, and they usually teach a lesson or offer advice. Through the examination of various fables, the reader is helped to understand human behavior.

The essential questions for this unit of study:

- What are the characteristics of myths and fables? How does a reader distinguish between the two?
- How did myths help people understand their world?
- Did different cultures have different beliefs about the same thing?
- How do we learn about human behavior through the reading of myths and fables?
- What kinds of lessons can we learn from a myth and fable?
- How can readers use the text to make inferences, draw conclusions and develop theories about characters and their stories?
- How does understanding unfamiliar words help readers comprehend what is read?
- What strategies are most efficient when decoding unfamiliar multisyllabic words?

#### Novel Study: Journey

During this unit, readers will enter into a shared reading experience, which allows them to grow intellectually, socially and emotionally. This study comes after students have had a wealth of reading experiences and multiple opportunities to develop skills and strategies to comprehend at high levels. Students will analyze and infer about characters, their thoughts, actions and motivations, and how they are impacted or impact the events of the story. Students will determine the theme of the story, and they will learn how to interpret point of view. As in previous units, students are expected to quote the text explicitly to support their thinking and responses.

The essential questions for this unit of study:

- How does what you know (prior knowledge) help you understand text?
- How do text features and characteristics of informational text influence a reader's interpretation?
- How do reading strategies help the reader understand and retain information from reading?
- How does the strategy of questioning propel readers forward?
- How does identifying main idea and supporting details help the reader to understand and retain information?
- How can readers increase their reading/writing vocabulary through wide reading, word study and content area study?

## **FOURTH GRADE**

### **Writing Units of Study**

#### Raising the Quality of Personal Narrative

Summary: Personal narrative is an excellent first unit because, as students write about the true stories of their lives, a community of trust is built within the classroom. This unit rests on the shoulders of all of the personal narrative work that has come before. Students will revisit the characteristics that are found in personal narratives and draw upon the repertoire of strategies learned in previous grades. They come to fourth grade with a great deal of prior instruction and practice with narrative writing. Many are able to write controlled, sequential narratives about a small event in their lives. The Common Core expectations for narrative are very high and will challenge students to lift the level of “elaboration” by weaving actions, thoughts and dialogue to “show don’t tell” in their stories. It is especially important that students write strong narratives with fluency, detail, structure, and a command of conventions, as these same skills will transfer to other genres.

This unit will also focus on reflection of topic choice and purpose to help focus writing. Writers will ask themselves the question, “What am I trying to say?” and tie together their leads, endings and the heart of the story, to answer that question. This element of meaning/significance will be a focus of every writing unit during the year. Finally, writers will read and notice features in mentor texts that can be carried over into the revision of their own stories. Through mini-lessons, conferences and small group work, students will lift the quality of their narratives.

The essential questions for this unit of study:

- What elements make up the structure of narrative?
- How do writers use structure, elaboration, craft, and meaning/significance to raise the quality of their writing?
- How can I use mentor text to improve my writing?
- How do I recreate an event so that it does not sound like a summary?
- How do I use the rules of written language so that I communicate clearly?

#### Writing Realistic Fiction

Summary: Realistic fiction means fiction that is realistic or lifelike. Fourth graders begin the year writing personal narratives and now continue to write in the familiar narrative structure, this time using their life experiences to create fiction stories. As writers explore mentor texts during the unit, they learn that fiction writers get ideas by paying attention to their lives. Ideas are everywhere! Also, using mentor texts they will identify the central characters and the conflicts and struggles they face. They will work to create these obstacles in their own stories. Students will learn how to write about what a character wants, and needs. They will learn how to create struggles and obstacles for their characters. Students will create scenes for each part of their story to help slow down the writing, and keep it suspenseful. They will connect to the fiction stories that they read to help understand how the story characteristics come to life. For example, if they analyze the internal and external characteristics in their novels, they will better understand how to create and develop characters for their own stories. In this unit, students will continue to rehearse, plan, and edit, throughout the whole writing process.

The Common Core State Standards call for fourth graders to “write with an awareness of audience and careful attention to craft, expecting that writers will orient the reader, and use concrete words and phrases and sensory details to convey experiences and events precisely.” In addition, students are asked to “control how a story unfolds and use transition words and phrases to manage the sequence of events.”



Finally, they must provide a conclusion that connects to the heart of the story. Only through writing with volume and frequency can students achieve these goals.

The essential questions for this unit of study:

- What is a story?
- Where do ideas for writing come from?
- How do writers effectively plan for realistic fiction?
- How do writers develop scenes?
- How do writers develop characters that have struggles, and motivations?
- How do writers revise to raise the quality of their drafts?

### Breathing Life into Essay

Summary: The essay unit is designed to help students write well within an expository structure.

In this unit, students will write opinion based personal essays, where they advance a topic of personal significance. They will introduce a topic, and an opinion on that topic, supplying reasons to support their opinion, using linking words to connect their reasons to the opinion, and concluding with a final thought. Students will strengthen their personal essay writing so that they communicate their point with related ideas grouped together. Writers will support their opinions with small, anecdotal stories and informational data, such as quotes and/or statistics. The revision part of this unit focuses on the structure and elaboration that is specific to essay writing.

This unit begins with an “on demand” assessment of essay writing. Teachers will use this writing sample to determine the strengths and needs of each student. This assessment provides the opportunity for teachers to make flexible, homogeneous groupings based on the writing needs of structure, elaboration, craft, or meaning/significance. Each group can then receive targeted instruction during small group conferencing. Of course, teachers will continue to meet with students one-to-one, to move them through the writing process for their individual work. As the teacher examines student writing, also look through the lens of conventions, grammar and spelling as the teacher make decisions about future mini-lessons and group work.

The essential questions for this unit of study:

- How do writers develop the structure of essay?
- How do writers collect ideas for essay?
- How do writers develop their thoughts in a logical manner?
- How do writers support their opinions using personal experiences and information?
- How do writers logically categorize their supporting evidence?

### Literary Essay

Summary: Literary essay writing calls on a reader to focus on reading and reflect on the characters and ideas in their books. The objective of this unit is for students to write an expository essay that advances an idea about a piece of literature. Before writing, students read a variety of stories, noticing and reflecting on the characters and ideas that are presented. As students read and reflect, they may write on a number of ideas before deciding upon the one that is most compelling and can be expanded into a strong thesis statement. Next, they push their thinking by using conversational prompts and discussing their ideas with peers. Literary essays contain a thesis statement, a brief retelling of the story, specific details and quotes which support the thesis statement, and a conclusion which links the story's message to the writer's own life or to another text. As a whole, this unit calls on writers to draw upon and integrate both their knowledge of essay structure and their deeper understanding of characters and theme. Literary essays grow naturally out of a routine reflection about literature through discussion and writing in the Reader's

Notebook. To reinforce this learning, teachers need to use read-alouds to model how they read, think, and write about a story. This unit will blend reading and response to reading with the skill of developing a thesis statement and supporting it with evidence from one or more texts.

The essential questions for this unit of study:

- How do you use reading strategies effectively to understand, to ask questions, to communicate, and to synthesize information?
- How does writing about reading help the reader explore their thinking about characters and themes in literature?
- How does sharing personal thinking about reading deepen a reader's understanding of text?
- How do essay writers express their point of view to persuade a reader?
- How do writers use information from the text to support a thesis statement?

# FIFTH GRADE

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## Reading Units of Study

### Reading with Power

Summary: This first unit of the year sets the tone for the climate of the reading workshop. Teachers introduce rules, procedures, and expectations so that students know what is expected of them. There will also be a focus on building students' reading stamina and quantity of reading. To this end, readers will keep a "reading log" and reflect on the amount and types of reading they do. Teachers need to take time to stress the importance of stamina by encouraging students to read for longer stretches of time- at home and at school. Research tells us that students need to be reading two hours a day (home and school and across content areas) to maintain one year's growth.

Students come to fifth grade having learned reading strategies such as word solving, monitoring for sense, prediction, envisionment, inference, determining importance, synthesis, and reading with a critical stance. During this and future units, they are expected to access those reading skills and strategies and apply those skills to reading increasingly more complex text. Some familiar strategies, such as inferring, will require a new intensity and focus due to the complexity of text, the focus on how characters grow over time, and how they respond to challenges in a text.

A second focus will explore the writer's craft elements of creating mood, establishing point of view, and the effective use of figurative language. Again, although many of these elements have been introduced previously, fifth graders will be expected to do close reading of text, determining how an author's decisions about craft elements impact a story or text. For example, students will not only be identifying the point of view of the narrator or speaker, but also deciding how that point of view impacts the telling of the story or the presentation of information in informational text. These strategies can be reviewed and reinforced and new strategies explored through direct instruction and teacher modeling during whole class mini-lessons, interactive read-alouds and guided reading groups.

The essential questions for this unit of study:

- How do comprehension strategies help readers construct meaning?
- How do readers identify themes?
- How does summarizing help readers to understanding main idea?
- How does an author create mood in a story?
- How do readers use their own critical questions to deepen their understanding of a text?
- How can discussion and writing about reading increase our knowledge and understanding of an idea?
- Why is vocabulary development important?

### Developing Insights into Characters

Summary: During this unit, students are expected to access their repertoire of reading skills and strategies, learned in previous grades, and to read increasingly more complex text. Students will naturally continue to predict and envision as they read, but they will do so now with a focus on synthesizing all levels of information and developing theories about characters and their motivations. Readers will use inferences to grow their ideas about characters, and grow them into bigger theories. Readers will pay attention to characters' actions, and consider why the character acts in a certain way; but they will also consider other things about a main character's behavior. New work in this unit will support readers as they consider social and philosophical traits of a character. This will allow readers to see how outside influences such as

family, friends, culture and setting can impact the thoughts and feelings of characters in fictional texts. Through this work, readers will also come to understand that characters are complicated. They aren't one-dimensional, they often surprise us, and they often change throughout the course of a story.

Readers will also do the work of comparing and contrasting how different characters in the story can be affected by one event. Story events are consequential; the choices made by one character affect others, and single events often have a significant impact on other events.

The last part of the unit segues from inference work to interpretation. Readers are pushed to increase their synthesis of the text by comparing and contrasting characters, settings, events, or themes across several stories. Discussions will focus on how different authors explore the same topics and universal themes in different ways.

The essential questions for this unit of study:

- How do interactions between characters provide insight into the story conflict?
- How does asking critical questions about characters help increase understanding of their actions, reactions, and motivation?
- How do external forces such as family, culture and friends impact a character and his/her reactions to events?
- What strengths and weaknesses are revealed as characters face challenges and how does the characters' response to challenges provide insight into their strengths and weaknesses?
- How does an author's development of a character give a reader insight into the overall theme of a story?
- How does an author create mood in a story?
- How will comparing and contrasting characters and themes across texts help deepen understanding?
- How does the depth of a student's vocabulary contribute to the students' ability to read more effectively?

### Navigating Through Nonfiction

Summary: This unit of study builds on the work that students have done in the previous grades, focusing on main ideas and details in nonfiction text. The unit is divided into two parts. The first part will explore "expository nonfiction" (all about a topic). The focus will be on recognizing explicit and implicit main ideas and details, determining importance, synthesizing information and reading to learn. The second part will focus on narrative nonfiction. Here, students will explore "true stories" including, biographies, true adventures and stories of success and disasters. These forms of narrative nonfiction often focus on important people in sports, history, scientific figures or even animal characters. This study will require the reader to compare and contrast information in very different ways.

The Common Core Standards call on fifth grade students to "quote accurately from a text, explaining what the text says explicitly and drawing inferences from the text." In addition, students are expected to compare and contrast texts on similar topics as well as integrate the information as they speak and write about the topic. It will be important to reinforce lessons about determining importance, main idea and details, and making inferences as students notice how different authors take on the same topic but provide different information.

A second focus involves work done with organizational structures of text. Students' previous work required that they recognize and describe organizational structures of text. Now they are required to compare and contrast those structures, and to begin to realize how choices of structure convey content and ideas. The standards further ask students to not only compare a first hand account with a second hand

account of an event or topic, but to now “analyze multiple accounts of the same event or topic and notice the differences in the point of view they represent.”

The essential questions for this unit of study:

- How does an author’s choice of text features and organizational structures help to convey content and ideas?
- How does identifying main idea and supporting details help the reader to understand and retain information?
- How can readers synthesize information (put the pieces together) to make new meaning?
- What do we do when authors disagree about the same topic?
- How does the reader integrate information from several texts to speak and write knowledgeably about a specific topic?
- How can the reader increase her/his reading/writing vocabulary through reading across genres, word study and content area study?
- How can discussion, and writing about reading, increase our knowledge/understanding of an idea?

### Historical Fiction

Summary: The goal of this unit is to introduce the elements that define historical fiction. Students will learn how to develop individual and collaborative interpretations, and carry big ideas across time. Historical fiction is a genre that is inherently complex – as stories happen in a place and time that the reader has never experienced. Characters are caught up in historical and social issues of great importance, and the events that happen within the fictional story are closely related to real historical events. The beginning days of this unit will be spent teaching students to read more complex texts with deep comprehension. Students will learn strategies that will help them discover the nature of the setting, the ways people lived, and details about the characters and their relationship with the events of the time-period. Initially, shorter picture books will be used to scaffold students while learning the main characteristics of historical fiction and what makes this genre different from others. Students will be given an opportunity to explore issues and injustices that occurred during historical time periods. In addition, by learning how to read historical fiction with a critical lens, students will be able to apply this knowledge as they read other genres.

Skills stressed during this unit include inference, critical reading, synthesizing, point of view, identifying recurring themes and developing empathy for characters. Students will examine various conflicts and look closely at setting and how it can effect the actions and experiences of a character. After a week of instruction in the historical fiction genre using short texts, students will read a whole-class novel, Number the Stars, by Lois Lowry. Before reading, the teacher will build background knowledge about the time period and the Holocaust. Using the novel, students will further investigate the characteristics of the genre as well as the main character’s role and her impact on the plot of the story. Students will also build their synthesis skills as they make meaning about history and how the time period is portrayed in the story.

The essential questions for this unit of study:

- How do authors create the sense of another time in historical fiction?
- How is the mood established and how does it add to the reader’s understanding of the character and the time period?
- Does the time period of a story affect the plot and the main character?
- How does literature from other places and times help the reader understand historical events?
- How does reading and writing about a text broaden my thinking?

### Essential Questions: Novel- Number the Stars

- Is it acceptable to lie if you are protecting someone?

- Would you risk your life to protect a friend? A stranger?
- How can courage be recognized in times of hardship?
- How would the story be different if it were told from Ellen’s point of view?

Shared Novel: Fiction Study- Pictures of Hollis Woods

Summary: In this unit, students will return to the genre of realistic fiction. The class will read a novel with characters that they could know, with plots that consist of events and actions that can and do occur in everyday lives. They will make connections between realistic fiction and life, asking questions, visualizing and making inferences to deepen comprehension. The novel will be evaluated in terms of the setting, characters, plot, theme, style, and point of view. There will also be a focus on the unusual organization and craft features used by the author.

**Unit Essential Questions**

- How does an author’s development of a character give a reader insight into the overall theme of a story?
- How do interactions between characters provide insight into the story conflict?
- How do readers ask critical questions about characters to help increase understanding of their actions, reactions, and motivation?
- How do external forces such as family, culture and friends impact a character and his/her reactions to events?
- What strengths and weaknesses are revealed as characters face challenges and how do their responses to challenges provide insight into their strengths and weaknesses?

Reading/Writing Standardized Test Preparation

Summary: The best preparation for standardized tests is to teach students to be stronger readers and writers all year. In reading, they need to tackle stamina, volume and comprehension to build their reading muscles. In writing, they practice responding to prompts, using knowledge of genre characteristics and elements of good writing.

Throughout the year, readers have built stamina in both the amount of time they read and the length of text that they read within the genres of fiction and nonfiction. In addition, students have built a repertoire of comprehension strategies that are specific to each genre. In this unit, students will learn to transfer and apply all that they know about reading, to reading test passages and answering test questions.

In writing, students have gained knowledge about the characteristics of various genres and have had many opportunities to write within each genre. In this unit, students will learn to differentiate between types of writing prompts and respond appropriately about topics not of their own choice.

The pacing guide allows for about one week of official test prep. The remainder of the time, teachers are embedding standardized-test-like activities within the other units, throughout the school year.

Essential Questions: Test Reading

- What is the difference between test reading and real reading?
- How does knowing the genre of the passage determine the strategies used for comprehension?
- How do readers apply their knowledge of reading strategies to test taking?
- Which strategies are most effective for analyzing multiple-choice questions?
- What strategies help readers determine main idea from supporting details?
- What strategies help readers determine correct responses to open-ended questions?

Essential Questions: Test Writing

- What is the difference between test writing and real writing?
- What clues help students identify the types of writing prompts on a test?
- How can students plan quickly and effectively when responding to a test prompt?
- What strategies help writers determine responses to open-ended questions?

## **FIFTH GRADE**

### **Writing Units of Study**

#### Personal Narrative with a Touch of Memoir

Summary: This first unit of the year will refocus students on the writing workshop experience. Although it is crucial to establish routines and procedures for the workshop, this process should happen quickly. A brief discussion about rules and procedures, (e.g. where materials are stored, movement around the room) should allow the workshop to function efficiently. At the start of the unit, there will be an increased emphasis on helping students to write a lot and to cycle through the writing process with independence.

In previous grades, we helped writers develop a set of strategies for personal narrative writing. Fifth graders now have an opportunity to refine their skills as writers through a unit of Personal Narrative with a “touch” of Memoir. Drawing on all they know about narrative, students will now be encouraged to reflect upon the significance of remembered events and include their thoughts and feelings about the event or the experience. This ‘shift’ asks the writer to focus on a relationship with a person, or place, or thing, rather than focusing on an event. There should be a sense that the text is being written by someone older and wiser, someone looking back in order to make sense of the prior experience. Writers will construct narratives- a day out fishing with your Dad- but the purpose is to use this day, this episode, to reveal something about the writer.

This personal narrative should reflect who the writer was before the moment, an “explosion” of the moment, and finally how the writer was, or is, different after the moment. Also, what the writer learned from the experience. Remind writers, “you want your story to be interesting, allowing your reader to relive your experience with you”.

The essential questions for this unit of study:

- What are the topics, experiences and themes that are significant in your life?
- How do writers effectively tell their stories and decide what they really want to say?
- How do writers make strong choices about revising and editing their work?
- Why is revising a piece of writing as essential as the initial effort?
- Why is it important to use correct spelling and grammar?

#### Social Issues Essay

Summary: Students will bring their essay writing skills from work in previous grades, but they will be asked to take on bigger topics and to support those topics with greater detail. As essay writers, they will construct idea-based pieces in which they continue to craft powerful subjects and control structure, now in non-narrative form. Throughout this unit the students will write pieces that allow them to advance big ideas on social issues that are grounded in their own lives and also in the lives of the character’s they are coming to know through their fiction reading.

Students will select a social issue that they feel strongly about and develop an essay to state their opinion about the issue and give meaningful supporting details for their argument. In fourth grade they introduced a topic, stated an opinion, and created an organizational structure in which related ideas were grouped to support the writers purpose. They wrote more cohesive pieces linking their opinion and the

supportive reasons and provided a conclusion. At this level, writers will still need to do all of that, but now they must share a viewpoint and justify it with “logically” ordered reasons that are supported with facts and details. Opinions and reasons will be linked with words, phrases and clauses (e.g., consequently, specifically) to create a stronger cohesion. Fifth graders will write essays that contain anecdotes, quotes and facts to support arguments and opinions. Students will read mentor text essays, to identify “writer’s craft” techniques that they can incorporate in their own writing. They will work to gather support from multiple sources, including pulling ideas and themes from the literature they have read. Finally, students will publish a final essay that provides thesis, a concluding statement or section related to the opinion given.

The essential questions for this unit of study:

- How do writers brainstorm topics for their essays?
- How can analyzing text, reflecting on personal experiences, viewing media, and participating in discussions help develop ideas more deeply?
- How do writers develop and support a thesis that will affect the way others see that same topic?
- How do writers develop their thoughts in a logical manner?
- How do writers support their opinions using evidence from text, personal experiences, media, and discussion?
- How do writers produce a clear and coherent essay with attention to organization that is appropriate to the task, purpose, and audience?

### Fantasy Fiction Writing Unit

Summary: In this unit students return to the genre of narrative. The more students explore narrative genres, the more extensive understanding of craft they can control, such as shifting perspective, symbolism and metaphor, atmospheric settings, and development of minor characters. In this unit, they will use their life experiences to create fiction (fantasy) stories. It is often assumed that fantasy is about making everything up. In actuality, most fantasy is allegorical-real life stories and lessons cloaked in fantasy settings, characters, quests, or all of the above. Teachers will help students to differentiate the idea of “fantasy” from the idea of “anything goes”.

Throughout the unit students will apply all they know about writing concise, focused, meaningful stories, and transfer that knowledge to writing fantasy fiction. In order to help students write fantasy, two guidelines are followed throughout the unit: keep fantasy stories grounded in some way to the real world, and move *quickly* through the collecting process. Both of these guidelines will help to keep students’ ideas in the realm of bite-sized, approachable possibilities. Teachers will use the *Units of Study, Writing Fiction: Big Dreams, Tall Ambitions* as a resource for this unit, simply changing some content to more closely match the genre. Creating a fantastical setting, as opposed to a realistic setting, would be one example.

The essential questions for this unit of study:

- How do writers develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective techniques, descriptive details, and clear event sequences?
- How do writers develop characters for fantasy stories?
- How can writers develop secondary characters that interact with the main character in fantasy stories?
- How can writers use various lenses to reread and revise their writing?
- How can writers use mentor texts to shape dialogue, make paragraphing decisions, and accurately use punctuation?





# **ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS CURRICULUM OVERVIEWS**

## **MIDDLE SCHOOL**

## SIXTH-EIGHTH GRADE UNITS OF STUDY: AN OVERVIEW



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### PREPARING FOR STANDARDIZED TESTS

Students in grades 6-8 take standardized State tests.

The best preparation for standardized tests is to teach students to be stronger readers and writers **all year**. In reading, they need to tackle stamina, volume and comprehension to build their reading muscles. In writing, they practice responding to prompts, using knowledge of genre characteristics and elements of good writing.

**Throughout the year**, readers have built stamina in both the amount of time they read and the length of text that they read within the genres of fiction and nonfiction. In addition, students have built a repertoire of comprehension strategies that are specific to each genre. All year, students will learn to transfer and apply all that they know about reading, to reading test passages and answering test questions.

In writing, students have gained knowledge about the characteristics of various genres and have had many opportunities to write within each genre. All year, students will learn to differentiate between types of writing prompts and respond appropriately about topics not of their own choice.

The pacing guide for each State-tested grade level allows for ongoing test prep. Teachers are embedding “standardized-test-like-activities” within the other units, throughout the school year.

Because we know that there are some essential differences between reading and writing in a standardized test environment, the following questions are considered as we prepare students to take tests.

#### Reading

- What is the difference between test reading and real reading?
- How does knowing the genre of the passage determine the strategies used for comprehension?
- How do readers apply their knowledge of reading strategies to test taking?
- Which strategies are most effective for analyzing multiple-choice questions?
- What strategies help readers determine main idea from supporting details?
- What strategies help readers determine correct responses to open-ended questions?

#### Writing

- What is the difference between test writing and real writing?
- What clues help students identify the types of writing prompts on a test?
- How can students plan quickly and effectively when responding to a test prompt?
- What strategies help writers determine responses to open-ended questions?

## SIXTH GRADE UNITS OF STUDY: AN OVERVIEW



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### SIXTH GRADE WRITING

#### **Expressive Writing Unit Summary:**

In Sixth Grade Language Arts, students will learn how to create a personal narrative and/or realistic fiction piece using structure, elaboration and craft. The expressive unit of writing is designed to teach students how to write a well-structured narrative using literary elements, sensory details, sentence structure, author's voice and style, as well as language conventions.

- How can we use our senses to enrich our writing?
- What tools do writer's use to craft engaging, vivid texts?
- How is dialogue used effectively and correctly to enhance expressive writing?
- How can expressive writing create a lasting personal legacy?

#### **Informational Writing Unit Summary:**

In Sixth Grade Language Arts, students will learn how to create an informational piece of writing, based on research of a chosen topic. The informational writing unit is designed to teach students how to write a well-structured, unified and cohesive, non-fiction piece of writing by developing a thesis and including sufficient supporting details.

- How does a writer locate, organize and present information to support his topic?
- How does the writer's craft shape his message and inform his audience?
- How does the topic sentence / thesis drive the content of an essay?

#### **Persuasive Writing Unit Summary:**

In Sixth Grade Language Arts, students will learn how to use facts, reasons, and examples to convince an audience that their arguments are valid. Instruction will include a variety of mini-lessons, debates, timed writing, conferencing, and a final persuasive essay/letter. Students will learn how to use facts, reasons, and examples to convince an audience that their arguments are valid. Instruction will include a variety of mini-lessons, debates, timed writing, conferencing, and a final persuasive essay/letter.

- How does word choice contribute to a strong argument?
- Why is it important for a writer to know his/her audience?
- Why do people write to persuade others?
- What is the role of supporting evidence in building an argument?

#### **Poetry Unit Summary:**

In Sixth Grade Language Arts, students will read, analyze, and compose a variety of poems. Students will examine the genre of poetry by looking closely at different poetic devices and how they contribute to the poem. In addition, students will compose their own poetry in a variety of formats.

- How does the structure of poetry reveal the author's purpose?
- In what ways does poetry express emotions and ideas differently from prose?

**Research Task Unit Summary:**

All 6th grade students will take part in several, brief multi-disciplinary research tasks that build skills in a cumulative manner. Students will be able to apply and transfer library research and note taking skills to compose a multi-paragraph essay based upon an identified set of essential questions or enduring understandings (as determined by a student's Unit teachers). This will be taken through the formal writing process and incorporate 21st Century media literacy skills.

## **SIXTH GRADE LITERATURE/READING**

### **Literature Circles Unit Summary**

In Sixth Grade Language Arts, students will choose a novel from a selection based on a theme to read as a part of a Literature Circle group. They will participate in various jobs, discuss the novel with their group mates, and keep a response log.

- How does reading a book in a group setting differ from reading a book independently?
- How do individual personalities and learning styles impact the work of a group?
- How can the reading experience be enriched through a group novel study?
- How does allowing for choice impact the reading experience?

### **Novel Study Summaries**

#### ***Of Beetles and Angels Unit Summary:***

In Sixth Grade Language Arts, students will read the memoir *Of Beetles and Angels*, by Mawi Asgedom. Students will explore themes of success, world issues, compassion, and empathy, while reading this real-life memoir. They will utilize reading strategies to strengthen comprehension and discuss the genre characteristics of a memoir.

- What can you do as an individual to improve your world?
- What factors may influence whether you are successful or unsuccessful in achieving a goal?
- What makes you who you are as a person?

#### ***Crash Unit Summary:***

In Sixth Grade Language Arts, students will read the novel, *Crash*, by Jerry Spinelli. Students will explore the themes of bullying, friendship and decision-making while reading this fictional story. They will utilize reading strategies to strengthen comprehension of text and discuss story structure and literary craft.

- How do we learn from other people's differences?
- Why do people sometimes do something that they know is wrong?
- How do we grow from change?
- Why are some people bullies and some victims?
- How can someone win by losing?

#### ***Gathering Blue Unit Summary:***

In Sixth Grade Language Arts, students will be able to read and comprehend the novel *Gathering Blue*, by Lois Lowry. They will incorporate reading strategies, including Reading Apprenticeship, in addition to applying graphic organizers where appropriate. Students will explore the themes of strength (physical and non-physical) courage, worth/talent and tolerance while reading this fictional story of a dystopic society.

- How is everyone a contributor to society?
- What makes a person strong?
- How can what you don't know hurt you?
- Do you choose your future or is it chosen for you?

***Flush Unit Summary:***

In Sixth Grade Language Arts, students will be able to read the novel *Flush*, by Carl Hiassen. Students will explore the themes of sacrifice and courage, as they read the story of a boy and his relationship with his father and his family. Students will utilize reading strategies to strengthen comprehension.

- When is civil disobedience acceptable? When does it go too far?
- Why is it important to protect the environment?
- How do you create and maintain a trusting relationship with your family?

## SEVENTH AND EIGHTH GRADE UNITS OF STUDY: AN OVERVIEW



### *Note:*

*Based on multiple criteria including performance on district and state assessments, application of grade level (and above grade level) standards to increasingly complex text, indication of markers of success as measured by a district checklist (e.g. motivation, independence as a learner), and grade history, students are placed into two levels of English Language Arts in seventh and eighth grade: Academic Language Arts (Literature and Language) and Enrichment Language Arts (Literature and Language).*

### **7<sup>TH</sup>/8<sup>TH</sup> GRADE WRITING**

#### **Narrative Writing Unit Summary:**

All 7th and 8th grade students will take part in the expressive writing process. Students will be able to use precise, descriptive language to capture and express their thoughts, ideas, and experiences. Students will use various conventions and figurative language to reveal their unique author's voice and style. This will be taken through the formal writing process.

- How is figurative language used to enhance expressive writing?
- How do writers use language conventions and the author's craft to produce engaging, vivid text?

#### **Informational Writing Unit Summary:**

All 7th and 8th grade students will write in a variety of forms and for a variety of purposes to present and analyze information. As students explore the craft of informational writing, they will understand that clear and effective communication is a lifelong skill.

- How does gathering information and details help the author determine the organizational format of informational writing?
- How do the author's purpose and audience determine word choice, structure, and style?
- How does the author's use of structures, formats, and language conventions support a clear, coherent informational piece of writing?
- How do skilled writers discern which information is reliable and relevant to a specified purpose or thesis?

#### **Persuasive/Argumentative Writing Unit Summary:**

All 7th and 8th grade students will write and speak using persuasive strategies. Students will be able to recognize, understand, and effectively utilize different forms of persuasion (claims and counterclaims) in a variety of situations, in order to develop their written and oral communication skills and to develop their 21st Century media literacy skills.

- How do people effectively persuade others through their writing?
- How do appropriate word choices and persuasive techniques contribute to a strong argument?
- Why is it important for a writer to know his/her audience?
- How does the use of supporting evidence build an argument?

- How does a writer's experience affect his or her writing?



**Research Task Unit Summary:**

All 7th and 8th grade students will take part in several, short multi-disciplinary research tasks to build research skills in a cumulative manner. Students will be able to apply and transfer library research and note taking skills to compose a multi-paragraph essay based upon an identified set of essential questions or enduring understandings (as determined by a student's Unit teachers). This will be taken through the formal writing process and incorporate 21st Century media literacy skills. Sample "essential questions" might include:

- ✓ How have historical events or achievements impacted American or global life socially, economically, and politically?
- ✓ What can we learn and apply from historical events to help us understand current issues in the United States and globally?

## 7<sup>TH</sup>/8<sup>TH</sup> GRADE LITERATURE/READING

### **Literature Circles**

In both 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade, Literature students will select a novel to read within a small group and complete related tasks, both independently and cooperatively. Students will explore various themes (according to novel choice).

- ✓ How does reading a book in a group setting differ from reading a book independently?
- ✓ How do individual personalities and learning styles impact the work of a group?
- ✓ How can the reading experience be enriched through a group novel study?
- ✓ How does allowing for choice impact the reading experience?

### **Short Stories**

In both 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade, Literature students will read short stories by various authors. Students will explore various themes (according to story choice).

- ✓ Are all authors trying to achieve the same goal? What might that goal or those goals be?
- ✓ How might an author have to alter the elements of a story to include them in a short story?
- ✓ How do authors use the resources of language (lit. terms, etc.) to impact an audience?

Options may include:

- *Short Stories from Adventures for Readers, Book One (Grade Level)*
- *Short Stories from Adventures For Readers, Book Two (Grade Level)*
- *Short Stories from Prentice Hall Literature, Bronze (Enrichment)*
- *Short Stories from Prentice Hall Literature, Silver (Enrichment)*
- *Stories by Edgar Allan Poe*
- *Stories by Mark Twain*
- *Stories by O. Henry*

### **Core Novel Studies**

In both 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade, Literature students will participate in shared whole-class novel studies based on core selections for each grade level. Among the choices of novels for such study are the following:

#### ***The Outsiders Unit Summary:***

In 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade, all students will read the novel, *The Outsiders*, by S.E. Hinton. Students will explore the themes of family, pop culture, societal labels, stereotypes, character development, friendship, social stigmas, loneliness, socio-economic status, change, guilt, and grief while reading this fictional story.

- What is a family?
- What determines your path in life?
- What is an outsider?

#### ***The Thief of Always Unit Summary:***

All students, in 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade, will read the novel, *The Thief of Always*, by Clive Barker. Students will explore the themes of personal satisfaction & happiness, inner strength, character development, friendship, loneliness, change, guilt, while reading this fictional story.

- Is it human nature to want someone who struggles, to succeed?
- Does rich description that creates visual images promote reader interest?
- Do we appreciate what we have?

***The Watsons Go To Birmingham Unit Summary:***

In 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade, Academic students will read the novel, *The Watsons Go To Birmingham*, by Christopher Paul Curtis. Students will explore the themes of family, character development, friendship, Civil Rights, courage, and humor while reading this fictional story.

- How do the decisions a person makes have both short-term and long-term results?
- How do events in your life shape who you are?
- What needs are universal to all people?
- In what ways can your freedom and security be challenged?

***Tangerine Unit Summary:***

In 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade, Academic students will read the novel, *Tangerine*, by Edward Bloor. Students will explore the themes of perception, conflict, influence of deliberate settings, courage and heroism, troubled family relationships, friendship fluctuation, dealing with death/tragedy, fear, communication, dealing with disability and discrimination, moving to a new place, team unity and sportsmanship, and gender issues.

- How can a person perceive something as real when others don't see it as such?
- How does what's going on in the world around you influence who you are and how you behave?
- How can setting give a reader deeper insight into a story?
- What does it mean to be courageous?

***The Wave Unit Summary:***

In 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade, Academic students will read the novel, *The Wave*, by Todd Strasser (or *The Pearl* by John Steinbeck – Teacher Choice Between the Two). Students will explore topics including the concept that history can repeat itself, the balance between great power and great responsibility, the influence of propaganda, the power of group dynamics/peer pressure, the qualities of a leader, the effects of past mistakes on present society, and the rise of the Nazi party in Europe during World War II.

- Does society learn from past mistakes?
- What makes a person a leader that others will follow?

***The Pearl Unit Summary:***

In 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade, Academic students will read the novel, *The Pearl*, by John Steinbeck (or *The Wave* by Todd Strasser – Teacher Choice Between the Two). Students will explore topics including greed, wealth, perspective, social status, honesty, and family, identify symbols and interpret their meaning, identify elements of a parable, and understand cause and effect.

- How does the drive for wealth influence who you are and how you behave?
- What impacts our views of others?
- What lessons can we learn from parables?

***The Book Thief Unit Summary:***

In 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade, Enrichment students will read the novel, *The Book Thief*, by Markus Zusak. Students will explore the themes of family, happiness, opportunity, struggle, regret, life, death, forgiveness, misery, fear, humanity, and peace while reading this fictional story.

- What can words do?
- How does a tragedy affect a person or group of people?
- Why should a reader analyze an author's writing style?

***Lord of the Flies Unit Summary:***

In 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade, Enrichment students will read the novel, *The Lord of the Flies*, by William Golding. Students will explore the themes of leadership, survival, group mentality, character development, friendship, loneliness, change, and grief while reading this fictional story.

- Why does society need rules?
- How is a person's behavior influenced by his/her surroundings?
- Which qualities make a person a leader?
- Is there good and evil in everyone?

***Twelfth Night Unit Summary:***

In 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade, Enrichment students will read the play *Twelfth Night* by William Shakespeare. Students will explore the history of Shakespearean theater, the Elizabethan time period, structures of comedic techniques, and the structure of a play. They will also discuss the role of gender identity in society and its influences on life.

- What is comedy?
- How does an author create comedy?
- Why does a person's gender dictate how he/she lives?
- Why do certain characters use a disguise in *Twelfth Night*, and why is this thematically important?

***A Midsummer Night's Dream Unit Summary:***

In 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade, Enrichment students will read the play, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, by William Shakespeare. Students will explore the themes of love, reality, fantasy, class structure, and cultural/societal influences on behavior to understand and analyze the play.

- What is comedy?
- How can love be difficult? What forces impede love?
- How do fantasy and imagination influence how we see the world and behave toward each other?
- How is MND a comment on the times in which it was written?

***To Kill a Mockingbird Unit Summary:***

In 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade, students will read the novel, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, by Harper Lee. Students will explore the themes of prejudice, courage, empathy, and justice while reading this novel.

- What does courage look like?
- Do we see the world differently if we "walk in someone else's shoes"?

***And Then There Were None Unit Summary:***

In 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade, students may read the novel *And Then There Were None*, by Agatha Christie. Students will explore the elements of mystery and apply these elements to a mystery film.

- How do the elements of mystery contribute to the creation of suspense?
- How does the author's use of animal imagery enhance the elements of characterization in a novel?

***Killer Angels Unit Summary:***

In 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade, students may read the novel *Killer Angels*, by Michael Shaara. Students will explore the people and events of the Battle of Gettysburg.

- How do the personalities and perspectives of the major figures involved in the Battle of Gettysburg impact their decision?

- How do these decisions affect the outcome of each day's battle?



# **ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS CURRICULUM OVERVIEWS**

## **HIGH SCHOOL**

## HIGH SCHOOL UNITS OF STUDY: AN OVERVIEW



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The High School English courses focus on introducing students to varied genres of literature while also introducing them to literary terminology that they will need to apply throughout their high school career. Writing assignments are varied in order to prepare them for the challenges of college and career. The purpose of this course is to encourage students to think and read critically as they begin to explore new forms of reading and writing. They will encounter complex modes of communication in both their reading and their writing in a way that helps them more fully understand how language can be used to effectively relate complex ideas and experiences.

### PREPARING FOR STANDARDIZED TESTS

Students in grades 9-11 take standardized State tests.

The best preparation for standardized tests is to teach students to be stronger readers and writers **all year**. In reading, they need to tackle stamina, volume and comprehension to build their reading muscles. In writing, they practice responding to prompts, using knowledge of genre characteristics and elements of good writing.

The pacing guides for each State-tested grade level allow for ongoing test prep. Teachers are embedding “standardized-test-like-activities” within units, throughout the school year.

## ENGLISH I

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Depending on the level of their English class (English, Academic, Honors), students will read the following texts during their Freshman Year. They may be taught in any order.

### Core Texts

*Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte (H)  
*Julius Caesar* by William Shakespeare (H)  
*The Odyssey* by Homer (E, A, H)  
*A Raisin in the Sun* by Lorraine Hansberry (E, A, H)  
*Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare (E, A, H)  
*A Separate Peace* by John Knowles (A)  
*A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens (H)

### Selected Short Stories found in *Prentice Hall Literature Textbook*

“All Summer in a Day” (E, A)  
“The Necklace” (E, A)  
“The Most Dangerous Game” (E, A)  
“The Scarlet Ibis” (E, A, H)  
“The Red Death” (H)

### Other

Poetry

### ***Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte (Honors)**

In accordance with the genre focus on freshman year, the reading of *Jane Eyre* affords the opportunity for deeper analysis, independent reading, and close study of the elements of a novel.

- How did women struggle in their roles during the 19th century?
- How do the love and support of family and friends help one overcome obstacles and challenges?
- How does individual autonomy affect the success of a relationship?
- How does connotative language create theme, characterization, and mood?
- What are the various motifs in the novel?
- What is the purpose of the various motifs?
- How does the structure of the novel, and the way it was written impact readers?
- How can sacrifice, resurrection, revolution and absolute power be thematic ideas in the novel?
- What is Jane’s internal conflict?
- What roles do social class, gender roles, religion and autonomy play in the text?

### ***Julius Caesar* by William Shakespeare (Honors)**

In accordance with the genre focus on freshman year, the reading of *Julius Caesar* affords the opportunity for deeper analysis, independent reading, and close study of the elements of a drama.

- What is the role of omens and portents in the play?
- How did women struggle in their roles during the 19th century?
- How do the love and support of family and friends help one overcome obstacles and challenges?
- How does individual autonomy affect the success of a relationship?



- How do rhetorical impact and persuade an audience?

### ***The Odyssey* by Homer (All Levels)**

Primarily, *The Odyssey* is taught to outline the Hero's Journey (Quest) and then archetype of the hero, which is applicable to many and most texts.

- What qualities does a hero possess?
- Do we still need heroes today and why?
- How are the mistakes and struggles of life's journey valuable?
- How can excessive pride result in tragic consequences?
- What is the value and importance of home and family?
- What qualities make a work of literature endure throughout time to become a classic?
- Why are ancient texts and stories an inspiration for modern writers?
- What are the characteristics of an epic poem?
- What are Homeric epithets and what are their function?
- What are epic similes?
- How are the beliefs and values of ancient Greek society reflected in their literature?
- How is the hero myth cycle reflected in *The Odyssey* as well as our society today?

### **Poetry**

During 9th grade, poetry will be taught in conjunction with the larger core pieces of literature. These supplemental pieces will teach the foundational concepts of poetry as well enhance of the understanding of the core text.

- What is a poem?
- What are some different types of poems?
- How does the form of a poem affect its meaning?
- How does a poem enhance the reading of a larger piece of literature?
- How does reading a larger piece of literature connect to a poem enhance the poem meaning and understanding?
- How does an author's use of poetic devices and structure convey the theme of the poem?
- What is a stanza?
- What is a couplet?
- What is rhyme scheme?
- What is imagery?
- What is a metaphor?
- What is a simile?
- What is personification?
- What is an allusion?
- What is an alliteration?
- What is the difference between free verse and rhymed poetry?

### ***A Raisin in the Sun* by Lorraine Hansberry (All Levels)**

*A Raisin in the Sun* is primarily taught to expose students to the elements of drama and to develop understanding of the relationship among historical, cultural, and social issues and the author's choices.

- How does an author incorporate historical events into a work of fiction?
- How does an author's work reflect his or her life and the time and experiences in which he or she lived?
- What are the effects of stereotyping and segregation on individuals as well as society as a whole?
- How does a family survive and remain united in the face of obstacles?

- What is the American Dream?
- How do members of a family balance the conflicting expectations of self and family?
- What is a theme?
- What is a symbol?
- What is the purpose of stage directions?
- How do stage directions affect the plot, theme, mood and character?
- What is an allusion?
- What is a foil character?

***The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare (All Levels)**

*The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet* is taught in order to introduce students to Shakespeare's writing and to demonstrate the thematic relevance to the present day.

- How does an author's work reflect his or her time period?
- What constitutes a drama?
- How does hatred ruin the dreams and hopes of an individual?
- How does the language and action of a play combine to create the audience's experience?
- How do fate and individual choice interact to control the lives of fictional characters?
- What is a theme?
- What is a couplet?
- What is a tragedy?
- What is dramatic irony?
- What is a climax?
- What is iambic pentameter?
- What is a monologue?
- What is a soliloquy?
- What is an aside?
- What are static and dynamic characters?
- What are flat and round characters?
- What purpose do the stage directions serve and why are they important?
- What is a foil character?
- What is a motif?
- What are the seven types of imagery?

***A Separate Peace* by John Knowles (Academic)**

The reading of *A Separate Peace* affords the opportunity for deeper analysis, independent reading, and close study of the elements of a novel. Study of this particular novel will also build students' understanding of the American novel, which will be studied in Grade 10.

- How does an author's use of motif create meaning for the reader?
- How does the use of allusion create meaning for the reader?
- How does the use of symbol create meaning for the reader?
- How does the time period affect the characters' personalities and actions?
- How does the historical/social context of the novel enhance thematic content?
- What causes interpersonal conflict?
- How does jealousy impact a friendship?
- What role do symbols (such as the characters' names, the rivers, the seasons, the tree, the war) have in the novel
- In what ways does Phineas represent a demigod in the eyes of Gene?
- How is evident that Gene is searching for his personal identity throughout the novel?

- What is the significance of the Garden of Eden motif?

***A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens (Honors)**

*A Tale of Two Cities* affords the opportunity for deeper analysis into motif and symbolism while providing the historical context of the French Revolution to highlight the thematic issues of oppression and its impact on the people.

- How does absolute power influence the individual?
- Under what circumstances can radical individuals gain power?
- What can cause a hopeless individual to change his/her life?
- Are there any circumstances under which death is heroic?
- How do authors use literature as a tool?
- What are the seven types of imagery?
- What are the various motifs in the novel?
- What is the purpose of the various motifs?
- How does the structure of the novel, and the way it was written impact readers?
- How can sacrifice, resurrection, revolution and absolute power be thematic ideas in the novel?
- What is Carton's internal conflict?
- How do Dickens' life experiences impact his novel?
- What is Dickens' opinion of the events occurring in his novel?

## ENGLISH II

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Depending on the level of their English class (English, Academic, Honors), students will read the following texts during their Sophomore Year. They may be taught in any order.

### Core Texts for English, Academic, and Honors

- *The Catcher in the Rye* by JD Salinger
- *The Crucible* by Arthur Miller
- *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck
- Selected texts from *Prentice-Hall Literature: The American Experience* as enumerated in individual units

### English II

- Selected texts from *Prentice-Hall Literature: The American Experience* as enumerated in individual units

### Academic English II

- *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain
- *The Moon is Down* by John Steinbeck
- *My Antonia* by Willa Cather **OR** *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* by L. Frank Baum **OR** *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury
- Selected texts from *Prentice-Hall Literature: The American Experience* as enumerated in individual units

### Honors English II

- *My Antonia* by Willa Cather
- *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck
- *The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne
- *The Glass Menagerie* by Tennessee Williams
- *Ethan Frome* by Edith Wharton
- *The Red Badge of Courage* by Stephen Crane
- *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain
- *Bartleby, The Scrivener* by Herman Melville
- Selected texts from *Prentice-Hall Literature: The American Experience* as enumerated in individual units

### ***The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain (Academic & Honors)**

*The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* provides a rich and diverse reading of the cultural, historical, sociological and literary issues that are essential aspects of American cultural identity.

- How does a person's physical environment impact his/her life?
- What role does society play in shaping who we are?
- What does freedom mean?
- How does one go about making important decisions?
- What does Huck Finn teach about what it means to be human?

### ***The Catcher in the Rye* by JD Salinger (All Levels)**

This unit aims to explore the work of modern author JD Salinger. Students will explore the themes of isolation, loneliness and personal growth. It is hoped that students will connect in some way with the main character's struggle and grow in compassion and empathy for others while gaining personal insights.

- What insights about grief and loss do authors provide through their characters and their human experiences?
- Why do adolescents have difficulty sharing their feelings and emotions?
- What impact does an author's choice of point of view have on the reader?
- Why did American authors create the modern anti-hero?

### ***The Crucible* by Arthur Miller (All Levels)**

Some teachers approach this as part of a protest unit while others do it more as an historical period connection. In either case, students are presented with ethical dilemmas posed by holding to the truth or lying to save oneself. Students will explore the dark side of being a part of a society as well as the conflict between individuality and the need for social order.

- What effect do emotions have on individuals and their behaviors?
- Why do people often behave differently in groups than they do alone?
- How are people influenced by the society in which they live?
- How does an individual maintain his or her own values when society pressures the individual to change?
- Why do authors use historical settings to expose contemporary issues?
- Why is irony an effective literary device?
- How effective is literature/drama as a form of social protest?

### ***Ethan Frome* by Edith Wharton (Honors)**

In *Ethan Frome*, Edith Wharton writes about life in New England, placing a heavy emphasis on the significance of the regional landscape, culture, mores, and dialect.

- How does a person's physical environment impact his/her life?
- How does one reconcile familial obligations with personal desires?
- How much control do individuals have over the choices they make?
- How does one's attitude affect the way an individual deals with the difficulties in life?

### ***The Glass Menagerie* by Tennessee Williams (Honors)**

*The Glass Menagerie* addresses the development of the text within a social critical perspective as it examines the American Dream.

- How can it be possible not to know oneself?
- Is it true that other people can know you better than you know yourself?
- What can make the process of self-discovery difficult and what outside factors are influential?
- What can be learned from the struggles of others that may be applied in the search for one's own self-identity?
- How do one's beliefs and self-identity affect each other?
- How is one's life affected either by the process of self-discovery or by the failure to try to understand oneself?
- How does one search for an individual reality in a sometimes hostile world?
- How can people communicate more effectively to reach a solution to conflict?
- What role do empathy and perspective play in communicating effectively?

***The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck (Honors)**

*The Grapes of Wrath* uncovers how the country changed after Black Thursday and how the country changed after that happened, and how the public's American Dream changed in the Great Depression.

- How does characterization help develop theme?
- What are human issues and social themes that transcend time and place?
- What are the criteria for forming judgments about others and do they change according to circumstance?
- What are the responsibilities, expectations, and realities regarding friendship?
- What is the American dream and what purpose does it serve in an individual's life?
- In what way does one's race, gender, class, or intelligence affect one's experience and situation in life?

***My Antonia* by Willa Cather (Honors)**

*My Antonia* narrates the story of a female protagonist, a first generation immigrant girl from Bohemia, from the perspective of her childhood friend. As a paramount text of the American literary canon, this novel examines important American themes.

- What was life like for those who immigrated into the United States?
- How does a person's physical environment impact his/her life?
- How do authors use symbols and figurative language to help convey theme?
- How does a person deal with grief and loss of a loved one?
- How does a person's outlook on life change as he/she ages?

**A Nation is Born: Romantic American Literature (All Levels)**

This unit takes students from the time of post-colonial independence through the Civil War era focusing on the first uniquely post colonial "American" literature. Of special emphasis in this unit is the essential question, "What makes American Literature American?" This is a great survey unit which explores short stories, poems and Transcendental philosophy.

- How does literature shape or reflect society?
- What makes American literature American?
- What is the relationship between place and literature?
- What is the relationship between time and literature?

**Native American Literature (All Levels)**

Teachers of American Literature may be tempted to include only works that were composed after the arrival of European settlers. This unit focuses on cultural and spiritual works composed prior to colonial times. It looks at the values of pre-colonial America and compares them with those of colonial culture. This unit also emphasizes the universality of the human spirit and encourages students to investigate the expressions of their own and other cultures.

- Why do people tell stories?
- How is culture transmitted from one generation to the next?
- How does the Native American view of nature contrast with the Western point of view?
- What makes literature distinctly Native American?
- Why do cultures have origin myths?

***Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck (All Levels)**

This unit focuses on the differences between people and how people may exploit those differences to control others. In addition, special attention is given to the role of the individual in society and how that

role is assumed/assigned. Students will also be introduced to a main character that functions with a developmental disability and how that disability shapes him and those around him.

- How does characterization help develop theme?
- What are human issues and social themes that transcend time and place?
- What are the criteria for forming judgments about others and do they change according to circumstance?
- What are the responsibilities, expectations, and realities regarding friendship?
- What is the American dream and what purpose does it serve in an individual's life?
- In what way does one's race, gender, class, or intelligence affect one's experience and situation in life?

### **Persuasion: Reading, Writing, and Speaking (All Levels)**

In this unit, students will learn how to identify various persuasive techniques/devices and demonstrate how to use them in formulating both oral and written arguments.

- What makes a persuasive argument effective?
- How can a reader/listener differentiate between fact and opinion?
- What persuasive devices or techniques can be used to sway an audience?
- What role does the concept of audience play in planning and delivering a persuasive speech and/or a persuasive piece of writing?
- How does presenting an argument orally differ from presenting it in writing?

### ***The Red Badge of Courage* by Stephen Crane (Honors)**

*The Red Badge of Courage* examines elements of Crane's style that contribute to its realism told through the experience of a single soldier at war.

- What are the effects of war on both the courageous and the fearful?
- What is courage?
- What makes a hero?
- How does a novel reveal character?
- What is the significance in the title of the novel?
- What role does conflict play in making decisions?
- Does war change a person?
- How does one's beliefs affect his actions?

### ***The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne (Honors)**

*The Scarlet Letter* examines a society governed by Puritans in mid-17th century Boston. As the Puritans sought a purer form of religion, this novel looks at man's relationship to himself and to a Christian God. Hawthorne sets his novel in a deeply religious time, and thus, the language of the novel and the themes invoked contain deeply religious undertones.

- What effect do emotions have on individuals and their behaviors?
- How are people influenced by the society in which they live?
- Why do authors use historical settings to expose contemporary issues?
- How does the Puritan view of crime and punishment compares to the way Americans view crime and punishment today?
- Does the past shape our present or does our present shape our view of the past?
- How does Hawthorne use symbolism to develop the characters of Hester and Pearl?

### **Short Stories (All Levels)**

This unit provides students with exposure to a variety of short stories. These stories provide opportunities for students to discuss moral and ethical issues, explore the power of the written word, understand the connection between authors and their works and appreciate how works of literature can reflect and reveal truths about the world and human nature.

- How does the author's point of view affect the reader's experience?
- What is the most common plot structure of short stories?
- What tools do authors use to develop character?
- How can short stories provide insights into the human experience?

***The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* by L. Frank Baum (Academic & Honors)**

This unit takes an up-close look at the seminal American fairy tale. Students will explore the various symbols the author uses and how he uses those symbols to create a story that is truly reflective of American culture and American literary style, while building on similar works of European counterparts. The unit fits in very well with Romantic works and may also be used to explore many historical and gender themes.

- What is the American dream and what purpose does it serve in an individual's life?
- What are the human issues and social themes that transcend time and place?
- How do preconceptions related to gender shape our interactions with others?
- What barriers are there to self-discovery?
- How can the same basic story be translated across two media?



## ENGLISH III

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Depending on the level of their English class (English, Academic, Honors), students will read the following texts during their Junior Year. They may be taught in any order.

Text:

- *The Color of Water* by James McBride (E)
- *The Freedom Writer's Diary* by Erin Gruwell (E)
- *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* by Robert Louis Stevenson (E)
- *12 Angry Men* by Reginald Rose (E-optional)
- *Taming of the Shrew* by William Shakespeare (E-optional, alternative to *Macbeth*)
- *Macbeth* by William Shakespeare (E, A, H)
- *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston (E, A, H)
- *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* by Ken Kesey (E, A, H)
- *A Doll's House* by Henrik Ibsen (E, A)
- *1984* by George Orwell (A-optional)
- *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley (A, H)
- *The Metamorphosis* by Franz Kafka (A, H)
- *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe (A, H)
- *A Modest Proposal* by Jonathan Swift (A, H)
- *East of Eden* by John Steinbeck (H)
- *Native Son* by Richard Wright (H)
- *Moby Dick* by Herman Melville (H-optional)

Other:

- PARCC Preparation Unit

### ***The Color of Water* by James McBride (English III)**

This unit uses *The Color of Water* to guide students in understanding the key elements of a memoir and exploring how certain characteristics define a person's relationships.

- Why are there insiders and outsiders in a society/social group?
- Who or what qualifies an individual as an insider/outsider?
- How do the qualities that define an insider or an outsider affect his/her relationships in a society or group?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of being the insider/outsider?
- Under what circumstances might the roles of the insider/outsider reverse or change? What is the effect of this change?
- How does the author's style regarding his use of point of view affect the reader's understanding of the human drama?
- How does the author's use of symbolism and motif in a novel create meaning for the reader?
- What effect does the narrator/point of view have on the reader?
- What are the internal and external conflicts James and Ruth suffer?
- How does the historical/social context of the novel enhance the meaning for the reader?
- How does the author's use of local color and dialect enhance the reader's understanding of the setting?

- What impact does the revelation of secrets have on James' relationship with his family and does this cause him to be more of an insider within his family?

### ***A Doll's House* by Henrik Ibsen (All Levels)**

Teachers use the complex themes, structure, and language of *A Doll's House* to prepare students for the challenging reading and writing expectations of standardized tests and the senior year curriculum.

- Why are there insiders and outsiders in a society/social group and what are the advantages and disadvantages of being the insider/outsider?
- Under what circumstances might the roles of insiders/outsiders reverse or change? What is the effect of this change?
- Who or what qualifies an individual as an insider/outsider?
- Is it possible to feel like an outsider within a relationship?
- What role does gender have in determining one's choices in marriage?
- What changes in family can make one of its members feel like an outsider or an insider within the family?
- To what extent does either money/security or love become the driving force in many relationships?
- How does the time period of the play determine who is the insider(s) and who is the outsider(s)?
- What is Torvald Helmer's attitude towards women?
- What is the role of married women?
- Do people who live their lives to please others find real happiness?
- What is the significance of the play's title, *A Doll's House*?
- With which character(s) does Ibsen sympathy lie? How does Nora exercise her role as the woman/wife/mother?
- How can Brady's essay reflect Nora's feelings?
- How does the narrator in Angelou's poem differ from Nora? What contributes to these differences?
- How do Greer's descriptions of traditional Middle Eastern relationships differ from Nora and Torvald's relationship?

### ***East of Eden* by John Steinbeck (Honors)**

Teachers use the complex themes, structure, and language of *East of Eden* to prepare students for the challenging reading and writing expectations of standardized tests and the senior year curriculum.

- What does it mean to be a human being?
- How does one reconcile the challenge of human existence: the struggle between the desire to submit to tradition (God) and the human need for fulfillment and self-realization?
- What elements are necessary for human happiness/contentment?
- What is the difference between power (control) and violence (cruelty)?
- How does man achieve the ultimate power of his own free will?
- How and why does love motivate man's behavior?
- What understandings must a man come to before he can learn forgiveness and acceptance?
- Is Cathy inherently evil or does she become evil through external forces?
- How does Cathy use power?
- How does Adam achieve the capacity for forgiveness and acceptance?
- How does Cal achieve the capacity to triumph over adversity and determine his own fate?
- What is Lee's role in the lives of the Trasks and the Hamiltons?
- How does Steinbeck's use of literary techniques enhance the artistic quality of the novel?
- How and why is the setting important to the novel?

### ***Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley (Academic, Honors)**

Teachers use the complex themes, structure, and language of *Frankenstein* to prepare students for the challenging reading and writing expectations of standardized tests and the senior year curriculum.

- Why are there insiders and outsiders in a society/social group?
- Who or what qualifies an individual as an insider/outsider?
- How do the qualities that define an insider or an outsider affect his/her relationships in a society or group?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of being the insider/outsider?
- Under what circumstances might the roles of the insider/outsider reverse or change? What is the effect of this change?
- How does an author use setting to create meaning for the reading (importance of nature)?
- What qualities make Victor an outsider?
- Is Victor an outsider because of external forces or because of how he perceives himself?
- How does Victor use power? How does the creature use power?
- What is the importance of the minor characters in the novel? How does Shelley use them?

### ***The Freedom Writer's Diary* (Film/Education Unit) (English III)**

Students will study and do analysis of the cinematic and literary elements of the film and memoir, *The Freedom Writer's Diary*. Teachers use the complex themes, structure, and language of *The Freedom Writer's Diary* to prepare students for the challenging reading and writing expectations of standardized tests and the senior year curriculum.

- Why are there insiders and outsiders in a society/social group and what are the advantages and disadvantages of being the insider/outsider?
- What factors qualify an individual as an insider/outsider in a given situation?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages to being the insider/outsider?
- Under what circumstances might the roles of insiders/outsiders reverse or change? What is the effect of this change?
- Is it possible to feel like an outsider within a relationship?
- How does the author's use of symbols and motifs create imagery?
- How does an author use point of view to develop plot, theme, characterization, tone, and mood?
- How does the historical/social context of a novel impact the comment made by the author(s)?
- What particular techniques does an author use when wanting an audience to experience what the characters feel?

### ***Macbeth* by William Shakespeare (All Levels)**

Students will study and do analysis of the literary and thematic elements of William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Teachers use the complex themes, structure, and language of *Macbeth* to prepare students for the challenging reading and writing expectations of standardized tests and the senior year curriculum.

- Why are there insiders and outsiders in a society/social group?
- Who or what qualifies an individual as an insider/outsider?
- How do people's appearances influence whether they are insiders or outsiders?
- Who determines what is normal or abnormal, beautiful or ugly?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of being the insider/outsider?
- Under what circumstances might the roles of the insider/outsider reverse or change? What is the effect of this change?
- Does man control his own fate, or does fate take its own course?
- At what point does ambition stop being constructive and start becoming destructive?
- Does the ends justify the means?
- How does guilt manifest itself?

- How does Shakespeare’s use of imagery help to develop character?
- How do recurring images of nature work to develop theme, plot, and characterization?
- Who is to blame (Macbeth, Lady Macbeth, the witches, etc.)?
- What is a tragic hero? How can Macbeth fit into the definition of a tragic hero (according to Aristotle).

***The Metamorphosis* by Franz Kafka (Academic, Honors)**

Students will study and do analysis of the literary and thematic elements of Franz Kafka’s *The Metamorphosis*. Teachers use the complex themes, structure, and language of *The Metamorphosis* to prepare students for the challenging reading and writing expectations of standardized tests and the senior year curriculum.

- Why are there insiders and outsiders in a society/social group?
- Who or what qualifies an individual as an insider/outsider?
- How do people’s appearances influence whether they are insiders or outsiders?
- Who determines what is normal or abnormal, beautiful or ugly?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of being the insider/outsider?
- Under what circumstances might the roles of the insider/outsider reverse or change? what is the effect of this change?
- In what ways do writers portray characters searching for the self?
- How do writers in different countries explore the theme of insiders and outsiders within their writing?
- What does Gregor’s physical transformation represent? Explain.
- How does the entire family (individually and collectively) change as a result of Gregor’s transformation?
- How does Gregor’s family treat him before and after his change? Why do they treat him this way?
- How does Gregor’s reaction to his transformation contribute to the genre of the story?
- Is Gregor ever an insider in this story? Why or why not?
- What does Kafka’s and Garcia Marquez’s use of magical realism as a genre imply about the theme searching for the self?
- In each of the essays by Walker, Rodriguez, Sawaquat, and Baker, what is the identity that each author is searching for? Do they discover their “self”? If so, how does the revelation occur?
- Which genre (short story, essay, poem) is most effective in reflecting the idea of searching for the self? Explain.
- How much is becoming assimilated in one’s environment part of the search for the self?
- How important is the use of first person narrative in a literary work focused on searching for the self?

***Moby Dick* by Herman Melville (Honors)**

Students will study and do analysis of the literary and thematic elements of *Moby Dick*. Teachers use the complex themes, structure, and language of *Moby Dick* to prepare students for the challenging reading and writing expectations of standardized tests and the senior year curriculum.

- What is the purpose of analyzing a work of literature using one or more theories of literary criticism?
- Why is/How does the close reading of a text essential to achieve an understanding of the author’s meaning?

***Native Son* by Richard Wright (Honors)**

Students study and do analysis of the literary and thematic elements of Richard Wright's *Native Son*. Teachers use the complex themes, structure, and language of *Native Son* to prepare students for the challenging reading and writing expectations of standardized tests and the senior year curriculum.

- To what degree does the social context of one's life play a role in one's responsibility for his actions?
- What are the results of analyzing a text using different schools of literary thought?
- In what ways does the close reading of a small passage in a novel enhance a reader's understanding of the text as a whole?
- What is the impact of critics' tendency to overlook the artistic elements of Black American literature?
- In what ways is a man's life influenced by fate chance, and free will?
- What can be learned about the relationship between the genders, races, and classes through the study of literature?
- In what ways does the social context of *Native Son* complicate the question of Bigger's guilt?
- How does Wright's use of literary techniques enhance the artistic quality of the novel?
- How are Bigger's relationships relevant to our understanding of him and/or the novel as a whole?
- What roles do fate, chance, and free will play on Bigger's life?
- What are the essential paradoxes found in *Native Son*, and how do they affect the reader's response to Bigger?
- What are the parallels between the art of tragedy as defined by Aristotle and *Native Son*?

#### ***1984* by George Orwell (Honors)**

Students study and do analysis of the literary and thematic elements of George Orwell's *1984*. Teachers use the complex themes, structure, and language of *1984* to prepare students for the challenging reading and writing expectations of standardized tests and the senior year curriculum.

- Why are there insiders and outsiders in a society/social group?
- Who or what qualifies an individual as an insider/outsider?
- How do the qualities that define an insider or an outsider affect his/her relationships in a society or group?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of being the insider/outsider?
- Under what circumstances might the roles of the insider/outsider reverse or change? What is the effect of this change?

#### ***One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* by Ken Kesey (All Levels)**

Students study and analysis of the literary and thematic elements of Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. Teachers use the complex themes, structure, and language of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* to prepare students for the challenging reading and writing expectations of standardized tests and the senior year curriculum.

- Why are there insiders and outsiders in a society/social group?
- Who or what qualifies an individual as an insider/outsider?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of being the insider/outsider?
- How does the author's use of symbolism and motif in a novel create meaning for the reader?
- What is the purpose of a character's portrayal as a martyr/Christ figure?
- What effect does the narrator/point of view have on the reader?
- How does the historical/social context of the novel enhance the meaning for the reader?
- What role do symbols (such as the fog, the combine, the title) play in this novel?
- In what way(s) does McMurphy emerge as the martyr/Christ figure?
- What is the significance of Chief Bromden as narrator?
- What is the social commentary that the author is making? (political, racial, sexual, etc.)

- What is the purpose of conformity?
- When should individuals conform, and when should they rebel?
- What techniques does Kesey use to successfully make his audience experience the narrator's state of mind?

### **Satire: *A Modest Proposal* by Jonathan Swift**

Students study and do analysis of satire in literature, media, and pop culture-- specifically for the purpose of social commentary in *A Modest Proposal*. Teachers use *A Modest Proposal* as a foundation for understanding Satire, the key elements of satire, and how humor is used for social and political commentary.

- Why are there insiders and outsiders in a society/social group?
- Who or what qualifies an individual as an insider/outsider?
- How do the qualities that define an insider or an outsider affect his/her relationships in a society or group?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of being the insider/outsider?
- Under what circumstances might the roles of the insider/outsider reverse or change? What is the effect of this change?
- In what ways is the struggle for human rights in society reflected in satire?
- How does the political/social context of a text impact the understanding of the author's commentary?
- What specific techniques do authors use when wanting an audience to understand their purpose and point of view?

### ***The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* by Robert Louis Stevenson (English III)**

Students study and do analysis of the literary and thematic elements of Robert Louis Stevenson's novella, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. Teachers use the complex themes, structure, and language of *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* to prepare students for the challenging reading and writing expectations of standardized tests and the senior year curriculum.

- Is humankind inherently good or evil?
- What is the relationship between freedom and responsibility?
- Do individuals have a moral obligation not to allow their own freedom to negatively impact other human beings?
- How do individuals control their dark side and reconcile their dual nature?
- Why are there insiders and outsiders in a society/social group?
- Who or what qualifies an individual as an insider/outsider?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of being the insider/outsider?
- How does the author's use of symbolism and motif in a novel create meaning for the reader?
- What effect does the narrator/point of view have on the reader?
- How does the historical/social context of the novel enhance the meaning for the reader?

### ***The Taming of the Shrew* by William Shakespeare**

Students study and do analysis of the literary and thematic elements of William Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*. This unit uses the complex structure, themes, and language in *The Taming of the Shrew* to explore the gender roles of men and women and the struggle between power and love in relationships.

- Why are there insiders and outsiders in a society/social group?
- Who or what qualifies an individual as an insider/outsider?

- How do the qualities that define an insider or an outsider affect his/her relationships in a society or group?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of being the insider/outsider?
- Under what circumstances might the roles of the insider/outsider reverse or change? What is the effect of this change?
- What are the key elements of a Shakespearean comedy?
- How does Shakespeare use the characters to criticize human behavior and relationships?
- How is the theme of gender roles in society portrayed in the multiple plot lines, disguises, and mistaken identities?
- What type of language is used to create humor?
- How does Shakespeare challenge traditional gender roles?
- How is the struggle between power and love in a relationship reflected in the plot, characters, and language?
- How is characterization developed in the play?
- What is the purpose of the soliloquy and the aside?

### ***12 Angry Men* by Reginald Rose (All Levels)**

Students study and do analysis of the literary and thematic elements of Reginald Rose's *12 Angry Men*. Teachers use the complex themes, structure, and language of *12 Angry Men* to prepare students for the challenging reading and writing expectations of standardized tests and the senior year curriculum.

- How do people change based on the personalities contained within a group?
- How does an individual influence the opinion or actions of a group?
- How does one's perspective/personal experience influence one's understanding of a situation?
- How does the play deepen our understanding of the constitutional guarantee of the right to trial by jury and the role of the jury system in American democracy?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the jury system from a civic point of view?
- To what extent would you stand-up for what you believe in?

### ***Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe (All Levels)**

Students will study and analyze the literary and thematic elements of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. Students will use the complex themes, structure, and language of *Things Fall Apart* to prepare students for the challenging reading and writing expectations of college.

- What are the essential features of the hero's quest?
- How do cultural beliefs impact the realities of the people within that culture?
- What are the universal elements of society and culture?
- How do generational conflicts impact individuals and groups?
- What happens when two cultures collide?
- What do stories and proverbs reveal about the society that tells them?

## ENGLISH IV

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Depending on the level of their English class (Academic, Honors), students will read the following texts during their Senior Year. They may be taught in any order.

Text:

### Honors

- *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald
- *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare **OR** *Othello* by William Shakespeare
- *Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles
- *Siddhartha* by Hermann Hesse
- *Slaughterhouse-Five* by Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.
- *A Streetcar Named Desire* by Tennessee Williams
- *Alice in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll
- *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley
- *1984* by George Orwell
- *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald
- *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare **OR** *Othello* by William Shakespeare
- *Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles
- *Siddhartha* by Hermann Hesse
- *Slaughterhouse-Five* by Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.
- *Alice in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll

Academic:

- **Teacher Resources:** *What It Takes*, grammar resource for teachers
- **General Unit Resources:** Selected articles, chromecarts
  - [The Atlantic: "Is Google Making Us Stupid?"](#)
  - [Hayden Planetarium: "The Universe as a Muse"](#)
  - [Hayden Planetarium: "Doubling Time"](#)
  - [Greater Good: "How the Teen Brain Transforms Relationships"](#)
  - [Slate: "Women in Science, Technology, Engineering, Math - History of Advocacy Since 1940"](#)
  - [NY Times: Stephen Hawking on Black Holes](#)
  - [NY Times: "Finding Beauty in the Darkness"](#)
  - [Smithsonian: "What Defines a Meme?"](#)
  - [NY Times: "A Lonely Quest for Facts on GMOS"](#)
  - [Contents: "10 TimeFrames"](#)

Online Resources for Non-Fiction:

[The Electric Typewriter  
Longform.org](#)



Anthologies (contents under “look inside”)

- Phillip Lopate’s *The Art of the Personal Essay*
- John D’Agata’s *The Lost Origins of the Essay*
- John D’Agata’s *The Making of the American Essay*
- John D’Agata’s *The Next American Essay*
- Joyce Carol Oates’ *The Best American Essays of the 20th Century*
- Flavorwire’s “50 Essays Guaranteed to make you a better person”

Other:

- Expository Non-Fiction (A, H)
- Literary Non-Fiction (A, H)
- Poetry (A, H)
- The Role of Media and Technology in Society (A, H)

### ***Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley and *1984* by George Orwell (Honors)**

This unit focuses on how society and culture shape our values and experience of reality. Students will understand the enormous impact that language and culture have on our lives, as well as how and when to act ethically in an unjust or immoral society.

- How do we determine what is moral?
- What impact do society, language, power, and technology have on how we see, interpret, and experience the world?
- How do we responsibly reconcile our personal values when they don’t agree with society’s?

### **Expository NonFiction (Academic)**

Students will study and analyze the complex themes, structure, and language of various expository non-fiction texts to prepare students for the challenging reading and writing expectations of college. Students will do analysis and evaluation of complex expository nonfiction works.

- How do authors use vocabulary, syntax, and organizational structure to convey complex meaning?
- How can a synthesis of two or more expository sources create a higher level of understanding?
- How do authors effectively use different types of evidence to develop complex ideas?

### ***The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald (Honors)**

Students will study and analyze the literary and thematic elements of F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*. Students will use the complex themes, structure, and language of *Gatsby* to prepare students for the challenging reading and writing expectations of college.

- How do we develop our identities?
- How does our external self connect to our internal self?
- What does our own self-definition reveal and hide about our inner desires?
- How does social class impact our inter/intrapersonal relationships?

### ***Hamlet* by William Shakespeare (Honors)**

Students will study and analyze the literary, thematic, and dramatic elements of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. Students will use the complex themes, structure, and language of *Hamlet* to prepare students for the challenging reading and writing expectations of college.

- How does the use of language influence our perception of reality?
- How does the consideration of death impact the way we live?

- How does social and political manipulation impact personal relationships?
- How do we find a balance between thought and action?

### **Literary Non-Fiction (Academic & Honors)**

Students will analyze and evaluate complex literary non-fiction works. Students will use the complex themes, structure, and language of various works of literary non-fiction to prepare students for the challenging reading and writing expectations of college.

- How do authors use vocabulary, syntax, and organizational structure to convey complex meaning in a story?
- How do authors effectively use literary elements to express their points of view in their non-fiction narrative?
- How do style and voice impact the way the reader relates to the author?
- What do the experiences of reading literary fiction and literary non-fiction differ?

### ***Native Son* by Richard Wright (Honors)**

Students study and do analysis of the literary and thematic elements of Richard Wright's *Native Son*. Teachers use the complex themes, structure, and language of *Native Son* to prepare students for the challenging reading and writing expectations of standardized tests and the senior year curriculum.

- To what degree does the social context of one's life play a role in one's responsibility for his actions?
- What are the results of analyzing a text using different schools of literary thought?
- In what ways does the close reading of a small passage in a novel enhance a reader's understanding of the text as a whole?
- What is the impact of critics' tendency to overlook the artistic elements of Black American literature?
- In what ways is a man's life influenced by fate chance, and free will?
- What can be learned about the relationship between the genders, races, and classes through the study of literature?
- In what ways does the social context of *Native Son* complicate the question of Bigger's guilt?
- How does Wright's use of literary techniques enhance the artistic quality of the novel?
- How are Bigger's relationships relevant to our understanding of him and/or the novel as a whole?
- What roles do fate, chance, and free will play on Bigger's life?
- What are the essential paradoxes found in *Native Son*, and how do they affect the reader's response to Bigger?
- What are the parallels between the art of tragedy as defined by Aristotle and *Native Son*?

### ***Othello* by William Shakespeare (Honors)**

Students will study and analyze the literary, thematic, and dramatic elements of Shakespeare's *Othello*. Students will use the complex themes, structure, and language of *Othello* to prepare students for the challenging reading and writing expectations of college. For the honors level, students will analyze how language creates and reflects personal bias, as well as how it shapes our experience of reality. Study popular media sources to evaluate how, like Iago, they manipulate the public.

- How does the use of language influence our perception of reality?
- How do gender, race, and cultural background impact our personal relationships?
- How does social and political manipulation affect our choices?
- What are the causes and effects of jealousy?

### **Poetry (Honors)**

Students will analyze and evaluate various poetic works. Use the complex themes, structure, and language of various works of poetry to prepare students for the challenging reading and writing expectations of college.

- How do poets use vocabulary, syntax, and organizational structure to convey complex meaning in verse?
- How do poets effectively use literary elements to express their points of view?
- How do style and voice impact the way the reader relates to the poet?
- How does the experience of reading poetry differ from other types of literature?

### **The Psychology of Heroes and Their Journeys**

Students will analyze the thematic and poetic elements of Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*. *Oedipus Rex* explores the psychological aspects of the Hero's Journey (Quest), applying Jungian archetype analysis and Freud's psycho-sexual developmental theories.

- What qualifies someone as a hero?
- How is Oedipus' life relevant to readers today?
- How does Oedipus' psychological journey relate to our lives today?
- What role do archetypes play in *Oedipus Rex*, our lives, and the modern world?
- What roles to fate and free will play in the lives of literary characters?
- How does analyzing the play from a Freudian and Jungian perspective enhance our understanding and experience of it?
- How is the hero myth cycle reflected in *Oedipus Rex*, as well as in our society today?
- What are the primary elements of Greek drama (situational and dramatic irony, structure, tragic hero, etc.)? How are they still used today?

### ***Siddhartha* by Hermann Hesse (Honors)**

Students will study and analyze the literary and thematic elements of Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha*. Students will use the complex themes, structure, and language of *Siddhartha* to prepare students for the challenging reading and writing expectations of college. For the honors level, students will compare Eastern and Western cultural perspectives regarding the "self." Students will develop a personal definition of the self that fits our modern, digital age.

- What are the essential features of the hero's quest?
- What are the elements in the path to self-discovery?
- What are the different ways for a person to learn?
- What is the nature of the "self"?
- What is the relationship between man and nature?

### ***Slaughterhouse-Five* by Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. (Honors)**

Students will study and analyze the literary and thematic elements of Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*. Students will use the complex themes, structure, and language of *Slaughterhouse-Five* to prepare students for the challenging reading and writing expectations of college.

- How does our understanding of the concept of time impact our perception of reality?
- How do authors use non-linear storytelling to emphasize key themes?
- How do war and death change an individual and a culture?
- How can a person learn to make peace with traumatic events from their past?

### ***A Streetcar Named Desire* by Tennessee Williams (Honors)**

Students will study and analyze the literary and thematic elements of Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Students will use the complex themes, structure, and language of *A Streetcar Named Desire* to prepare students for the challenging reading and writing expectations of college.

- How do authors portray the hero's quest motif in both common and unique ways?
- How does gender influence social roles?
- How do people use sex and sexuality to assert power over other people?
- What is the difference between fantasy and reality?
- What are the social responsibilities within families?
- How does the past play a role in the present, and future?

# South Brunswick School District



## DISTRICT APPENDIX

**There are the various strands that cross content.**

**They have relevance to every curricular area and all grade levels.**

**The strands are interwoven into content and integrated into instruction.**

**They do not stand-alone.**

**A synopsis of each strand is included in this document.**

**The full SBSB K-12 District Appendix, with detailed information about each strand,  
can be found as a separate document.**

### Topics

Teaching for the 21st Century

Educational Technology Standards

21st Century Life and Career Education Skills

Character Education

Differentiation

Understanding by Design (UbD): “Reader’s Digest” Version

## Topic

### **Teaching for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century:**

#### **What does this mean and how do you do it?**

Students need to gain skills that will enable them to learn on their own, think critically and creatively, and apply knowledge to new situations. An emphasis needs to be placed on problem solving, teamwork skills, global awareness, and proficiency in using technology. Students need to learn to collaborate and work on authentic problems that they will likely encounter in their future careers. This section will outline what this means and how you “teach” for the 21<sup>st</sup> century: Elementary, Middle and High.

### **Tools for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century:**

#### **Life, Careers, and Digital Environments**

21<sup>st</sup> Century Life and Career Education Skills and Educational Technology Skills outline the NJ Core Curriculum Content Standards for these areas that align with PK-12 learning.

These standards are written into the curriculum documents for all areas of content—English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, PE/Health Education, Visual Art, Music, World Language and Library-Media. They are integrated into curriculum and instruction in places where it is relevant and meaningful to do so, and in ways that enhance learning. You will see these integrations explicitly noted in the curriculum guides: Elementary, Middle and High.

### **Character Education:**

#### **Safe and Caring Learning Communities**

South Brunswick takes an “approach” to character education that fosters the social, emotional and academic growth of each child. The intent is to create a safe and caring community while building life skills based on the five core values (CARES):

- C Cooperation
- A Assertion
- R Responsibility (and Respect)
- E Empathy
- S Self-Control

For over ten years, the K-5 teachers have been trained in and have followed the *Responsive Classroom (RC)* approach.

The middle school teachers have studied and/or been trained in the *Developmental Designs (DD)* approach to character education.

The high school approach has been named “Strive for Five” and includes an annual theme with related activities to bring Character Education to the forefront. There is always a service-learning project connected to the theme. In addition, the high school also follows the *Institute of Excellence and Ethics* (IEE) approach. The IEE approach allows for explicit teaching of Character Education through a series of multimedia lessons that are embedded into the students’ schedules.

### **Differentiation**

Differentiation of instruction is a deliberate and conscious method of planning and teaching that provides multiple avenues of learning. It means different challenges to different students. It is characterized by strategies that use an assessment of each individual student for readiness, interest and learning style to modify instruction in three ways: by content, process and product.

In this document, there is a brief description of several approaches and methods that have long been utilized in South Brunswick to meet the differentiated needs of students within the classroom.

- Bloom’s Taxonomy
- Gardner’s Multiple Intelligences
- Learning Styles
- Inclusion Classrooms
- Kagan Cooperative Learning
- Principles of Differentiation

It is expected that classroom instruction will be differentiated. This expectation is predicated upon the belief or disposition that “all students can learn.”

### **Understanding by Design**

For nearly two decades, the South Brunswick School District has held much value in the Understanding by Design (UbD) or Backward Design model of curriculum writing by Grant Wiggins. This model and the process of curriculum development, has been used in the district for many years. The curriculum template—which was recommended by the State of NJ and adopted/adapted by the District, includes elements of the UbD approach.)

You will note that in every curricular area, we begin with the end in mind (that is, the big idea). Enduring understandings, essential questions and performance assessments—all based on standards—are used in the process of curriculum development.

With this being said, it is not only important to understand the process of UbD, but also how to implement curriculum designed in such a way.

A brief overview of how to use Understanding by Design in delivering curriculum is included in the Appendix.