Unit 3--Literary Essay

Content Area: **English Language Arts**
Course(s): **English Language Arts**
Time Period: **Marking Period 2**
Length: **3 to 4 weeks**
Status: **Published**

Unit Overview

In conjunction with reading lessons on fiction and literary nonfiction, students will comment on and analyze works that they have read. Literary essays will follow standard writing conventions and the structure of a formal, academic essay, and students will base their observations and extensions on instances and evidence from the texts they read. Literary essays should reflect not merely an understanding of the literature that students read, but also of literary conventions and elements in general. Very importantly, each student's writing must reflect a genuine curiosity about literature and its reflection of human truths and experience. Students will draft both handwritten pieces as well as pieces using appropriate technology.

The literary essay unit is designed to provide students with the vital opportunity of seeing themselves as capable thinkers and decision-makers in the following ways:

- Students become more flexible in their writing and thinking as they track theories.
- Students develop a repertoire of strategies for analyzing character development, the author's purpose, craft, and thematic development within and across texts and/or genres.
- Students practice a variety of writing methods that establish a line of reasoning.
- Students engage with quality, grade-level texts, gaining in complexity.
- Students investigate the ways other writers write about complex ideas, synthesize the ideas of others in order to confirm or debunk their theories, and create a literary essay.

The unit can be divided into five parts:

- Theory building and creating a claim
- Organizing evidence to develop a line of reasoning and to support a claim
- Drafting and managing types of evidence
- Revising and editing
- Reflecting and celebrating

Standards

LA.RL.7.1	Cite several pieces of textual evidence and make relevant connections to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
LA.RL.7.2	Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.
LA.RL.7.3	Analyze how particular elements of a story or drama interact (e.g., how setting shapes the characters or plot).
LA.RL.7.5	Analyze how a drama's or poem's form or structure (e.g., soliloquy, sonnet) contributes to

	its meaning.
LA.RL.7.6	Analyze how an author develops and contrasts the points of view of different characters or narrators in a text.
LA.RI.7.1	Cite several pieces of textual evidence and make relevant connections to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
LA.RI.7.2	Determine two or more central ideas in a text and analyze their development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.
LA.RI.7.3	Analyze the interactions between individuals, events, and ideas in a text (e.g., how ideas influence individuals or events, or how individuals influence ideas or events).
LA.W.7.2.B	Develop the topic with relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.
LA.W.7.2.C	Use appropriate transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.
LA.W.7.2.D	Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.
LA.W.7.2.E	Establish and maintain a formal style academic style, approach, and form.
LA.W.7.2.F	Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented.
LA.W.7.4	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, voice and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1–3 above.)
LA.W.7.5	With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed.
LA.W.7.6	Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and link to and cite sources as well as to interact and collaborate with others, including linking to and citing sources.
LA.W.7.10	Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, metacognition/self correction, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.
LA.SL.7.1	Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 7 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
LA.SL.7.1.B	Follow rules for collegial discussions, track progress toward specific goals and deadlines, and define individual roles as needed.
LA.SL.7.1.D	Acknowledge new information expressed by others and, when warranted, modify their own views.
LA.L.7.1	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
LA.L.7.1.A	Explain the function of phrases and clauses in general and their function in specific sentences.
LA.L.7.2	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.
LA.L.7.2.A	Use a comma to separate coordinate adjectives (e.g., It was a fascinating, enjoyable movie but not He wore an old[,] green shirt).
LA.L.7.2.B	Spell correctly.
LA.L.7.5.A	Interpret figures of speech (e.g., literary, biblical, and mythological allusions) in context.
LA.L.7.6	Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific

words and phrases; gather vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.

Essential Questions

1. Evaluating my previous experiences in writing literary essays, what goals should I set for myself for literary analysis?
2. How do I develop a thesis based on the transformation of a character in a work of literature?
3. Which forms of evidence of the character's transformation should I include in my essay?
4. How should I structure my essay, which conventions should I employ, and which habits must I avoid?
5. How can I make the most of advice that I receive from peers and my teacher?

How can we write informational/analytical texts about literature that deepen our relationship with our books, develop our thinking, and increase our pleasure in and fluency with writing about reading?

- **Bend I**: *How can I use my reading notebook in innovative ways, responding to and reflecting on literature with voice and elaboration in ways that match the literature I respond to? In doing so, how can I draft compelling writing about literature?*

- **Bend II:** *How can I strengthen my writing about reading by analyzing craft, symbolism, structure, and perspective, as well as by crafting strong introductions and conclusions and editing for language conventions?*

Application of Knowledge: Students will know that...

- Appropriate vocabulary, tone, and writing conventions enhance a writer's credibility with an academic audience.
- Basic skills such as spelling, grammar, and punctuation apply to all writing.
- Clear and coherent writing illustrates development, organization, and style that are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- Conferences are two-way discussions whose frank interchange of ideas facilitates good writing.
- Coordinate adjectives before a noun must be separated with commas.
- Daily practice in writing is essential for development of skills and enjoyment.
- Dynamic characters in literature transform over the course of a work, and that change deserves analysis.
- Literary analysis requires not only profound assertions but also textual evidence.
- Literary devices add meaning to literature and are important topics for investigation.
- Writing is a process that unfolds over time, beginning with ideas, taking refinement over several drafts, and improving with inspiration from outside texts as well as with consultations with peers and teachers.

Application of Skills: Students will be able to...

- Analyze the transformation of dynamic characters in literature.
- Apply the basic skills of spelling, capitalization, and punctuation properly to their writing.
- Assist and receive assistance from peers in developing ideas, writing, revising, and editing.
- Complete at least the final phase of their work using digital and cloud capabilities and produce final products in digital form.
- Discern the theme or central idea of a literary text and analyze its development throughout the work.
- Interpret on both literal and inferential levels.
- Observe formal writing conventions, suiting vocabulary and tone to an academic audience.
- Participate in meaningful peer and teacher conferences, providing and evaluating advice and applying it as appropriate.
- Provide a clear introduction, a thoughtful and elaborate body, and a solid conclusion, all coherently supporting an explicit thesis statement.
- Use appropriate transitions to optimize continuity.
- Use evidence to back up their literary analysis.
- Write on a daily basis toward the completion of an extended research-based project.

Teaching Points and Suggested Activities

The following teaching points and activities are adapted from *Units of Study in Argument, Information and Narrative Writing, Grades 6-8* (Calkins et al., 2014) and serve as a loose framework for teachers, who will add and or emphasize based on their students' needs.

Teaching Points

"Writing About Reading." Units of Study in Argument, Information and Narrative Writing, Grade 7. Lucy Calkins, TCRWP

Bend I: Planning and Drafting Companion Books

Writing about Reading with Voice and Investment

- In order to truly understand what one is reading, a person can write about it—with the same power as when writing about his or her own life.

Using Graphics to Think and Rethink about Literature

- Writers can use graphics such as maps, diagrams, and color-coding in their notebooks to think through their work in fresh, new ways.

Thinking Big, Thinking Small: Ideas and Specifics

- To make their writing the best it can be, writers pause to ask themselves what is working with their writing and to think about how they can make it better. Writers have a vision of exactly what they are

trying to do, as well as what makes that type of writing powerful.

Explaining Thinking

- Writers use freewriting to explain their big ideas so that others can grasp their thinking. One way writers write about reading is to create informational companion books.

Close Reading and Analytic Writing

- Analytic readers notice many elements of a story, and think about how different elements of a story connect to and influence each other. They often use writing as a way to do this thinking.

Letting the Book Teach You How to Respond

- Analytic writers about reading don't just have one way to travel through a text. They vary their ways of thinking about and responding to it based on the particular challenges that the text poses.

Working Toward a Companion Book

- Writers write information texts about literature. Before they do this, they make a plan for this work by taking stock of what they've been thinking; they then devise sections or chapters that showcase their most insightful, important thoughts about the text.

Incorporating Evidence from the Text as a Means to Elaborate

- Information writers elaborate on important points by including details in their writing. Literary information writers, in particular, cite evidence from the story they are writing about by incorporating specific details and examples, as well as direct quotations from the text.

Reflection and Goal-Setting Using the Information Writing Checklist—and a Mini-Celebration

- Writers continue revising the drafts of their companion books with the help of a checklist and input from fellow student-writers.

Bend II: Writing to Deepen Literary Analysis

Reading Like Writers—and Writing about It

- Writers notice the particular crafting techniques an author used, figuring out why the author may have used them. That way, they can write about the insights they gain.

Writing about Symbolism in Texts

- When writing about a text, readers think about symbolism, tracking symbols and thinking and writing about what they may mean in different parts of the story.

Analyzing Structure in a Text

- One way readers analyze a story's narrative structure—especially if it's unconventional—is to write to explain how the author's structure choices affect the reader's understanding of the story.

Writing Inside the Story: Improvisations and Fan Fiction

- Another way to write about reading is to write extensions of a story, creating new scenes that fit the original story or that make the story go differently.

Writing Inside Perspectives

- Writers are able to develop and include the perspectives of different characters in a story, even when those perspectives differ from each other.

Writing Introductions and Conclusions

- Writers of companion books craft introductions that hook readers and preview the important sections, and write concluding sections that keep readers hooked long after they finish reading.

Final Edits and a Celebration

- Writers edit their pieces with careful attention to language conventions and then share their work with other writers, friends, and family.

"Literary Essays: A Mini-Unit on Analyzing Complex Texts for Meaning, Craft, and Tone." If...Then... Curriculum, Grade 6 (Assessment-Based Instruction). Lucy Calkins, TCRWP

Bend I: Writing Literary Essays that Explore a Theme or a Character in a Single Text

Exploring Ideas about Texts through Writing

- Writers use writing to think clearly and deeply about reading.

Revisiting Pivotal Moments in Texts

- One place that essayists know is particularly fruitful when searching for big ideas in a text are pivotal moments. Writers can zoom in on turning points or moments that a character faces a big decision or overcomes an obstacle and ask, " What does the moment really mean? What is it teaching the character or me?"

Analyzing Characters to Uncover Big Ideas

- Essayists study moments of strong emotion, turning points, places of choice, place where character learn lessons or change; the strongest ideas for essays are ones the writer can provide evidence from all parts of the text.

Crafting Thesis Statements

- Literary essayists develop a thesis by zooming in on a topic and text they hope to write about, picking a rough idea, and then trying that idea out several different ways until they find a thesis they can support.

Collecting and Testing Evidence

- Writers identifying evidence from their texts in the form of angled retellings of select scenes, paraphrased sections, and direct citations. They ask themselves, “Does this really support the idea I’m writing about?”

Using a Variety of Evidence to Support Ideas

- Essayists know that it is important to collect a variety of evidence to support a thesis. When writing about literature, essayists tend to rely on retelling parts of story that support their idea or quoting directly.

Drafting a Cohesive Essay:

- Writers compose body paragraphs with structure, place transition words and phrases to link ideas, and draw on what they know about introductions and conclusions to frame their ideas.

Bend II: Writing across Texts to Explore the Different Treatment of Similar Themes

Identifying Ways Essayists Compare and Contrast Two Texts

- Writers write a comparative essay, they take on a theme that emerges from more than one text, and they write about how that theme is treated differently by different authors or in different stories.

Planning Essay Structure and Collecting Evidence

Revising with an Eye for Coherence, Flow, and Effect

Presenting and Refuting Counterarguments

Revising with an Eye for Literary Elements

Using Outside Sources to Support a Literary Essay

Preparing for Publication: A Celebration

The following additional teaching points address the objectives of this unit and standards in the Common Core not specifically approached by the Calkins resource:

- Analyzing the transformation of dynamic characters in literature
- Making inferences
- Transition words and phrases
- Priorities for peer and teacher conferences
- Digital and cloud resources for composing, revising, editing, and publishing

Assessments

Assessment in this unit takes three forms: diagnostic, formative, and summative. Assessment rubrics are available in Lucy Calkins's Reading and Writing Project resource kits, but teachers may also develop their own rubrics in order to include more specific elements of knowledge and skills listed in this unit summary.

Additionally, student self-assessment and peer assessment should take place whenever possible--again, in all three forms: diagnostic, formative, and summative. Removing the traditional emphasis on teacher assessment enables students to take more initiative and become self-directed.

Also, whenever possible, teacher assessment should take place in the context of a conference, or at least be followed up by a conference. This reinforces expectations, advice, assistance, and ultimately, growth.

Diagnostic Assessments

Review of student's portfolio from the previous school year, particularly literary essays

On-demand literary essay: Read the following story, and explain how the author uses at least two literary devices.

Formative Assessments (Informal)

Daily observation of students' participation and products during the active participation segment of each mini-lesson.

Students' questions, comments, suggestions to teacher

Comments, corrections, and records from peer conferences between students

Formative Assessments (Formal)

Teacher-student conferences

Summative Assessment

Summative writing will take the form of both handwritten pieces and pieces generated using appropriate technology.

Published literary essays

Activities to Differentiate Instruction

While in most categories of writing, the Writing Workshop framework enables students to generate story ideas based on their own interests and experiences, literary essays pose a challenge in this regard. The topics of literary analysis are not as abundant as, for example, the story ideas students could generate when preparing to write a narrative. However, the unit sequence of this curriculum provides that students arrive at this task after creating their own literature and writing a formal essay. Also, teachers may elect to offer students the opportunity to write literary essays based on stories or books of their own individual choosing.

The Reading and Writing Project unit on literary essays serves as an additional resource for differentiation, providing instructional frameworks for essays on literary themes, writer's craft, and literary comparison. While in general concept, those three types of literary analysis are listed in ascending order from least to most abstract, teachers must work with individual students to help them express ideas in all types of essays at the depth appropriate to the students' abilities. Additionally, teachers will emphasize more basic unit objectives (e.g. spelling, punctuation, essay organization) with students whose writing abilities are below or near the norm while challenging students of greater ability to write about the figurative and inferential dimensions of the literature they read. These are merely some strategies that teachers will employ in suiting the writing experience to each student's interests, abilities, and needs.

For further differentiation, the active participation component of mini-lessons enables a teacher to move around and observe students at work on concepts and strategies that were presented in a whole-class format. The teacher can intervene at his or her discretion. Likewise, a sharing component of many lessons will allow for a sampling of work from multiple students. A greater flow of ideas and products brings about a more thorough appeal to the individual dispositions and learning styles of students listening. Also, this unit will culminate in a publishing/celebrating day on which students put their individual skills and products on display.

Supplementing this, teachers must promote various strategies during all phases of the writing process. Students will have opportunities to work alone, in pairs, and in groups. They will choose either to compose in a traditional pen-on-paper mode or to compose, revise, edit, and publish digitally.

Conferences also provide a critical opportunity for students to receive individual attention and instruction. Small-group conferences with a teacher will allow for a diverse mix of ideas and advice that students can apply to their work whether it was specifically given to them or not, and the discussion is often easier to follow and takes place in closer proximity to individual students than whole-class instruction. Of course, at several stages in the writing process, the teacher will hold conferences with individual students for formative and summative purposes.

In compliance with 504 plans and IEP's, teachers will review applicable documents, consult appropriate

personnel connected with special-needs students' cases, work closely with inclusion teachers and classroom aides, and communicate with parents in an effort to see to the specific needs of all students.

In some cases, most often in GATE classes, teachers may elect to have students compile their literary essays into a true publication. This will require many individual students to work in specialized capacities such as copy editors, section editors, editors-in-chief, and layout and design specialists. Over several instructional units, additional students will serve as archivists.

Integrated/Cross-Disciplinary Instruction

Literary essays will be written about fiction and literary fiction on a variety of topics, each of which will apply to content areas across the curriculum. The following are some fiction and nonfiction selections from the Prentice Hall Literature text for grade 7, along with the pertinent content areas.

Teachers may also assign literary essays on book-length selections. When assigning essays based on students' independent reading books, they will emphasize the affinity of the books' topics with other content areas. Also, students may receive an assignment based on a book they read as a class. The following are the grade 7 book-length selections and the content areas to which they pertain:

- *Charles Dickens, A Christmas Carol* (social studies/economics)
- L'Engle, Madeleine. *A Wrinkle in Time* (science and mathematics)
- Lord, Walter. *A Night to Remember* (social studies)
- Greenberg, Jan, and Sandra Jordan. *Vincent Van Gogh: Portrait of an Artist*--GATE selection (art)

While some teachers will provide instruction that includes specific concepts from various content areas, all should direct students to specific text and online resources pertinent to various content areas. Also, teachers will consult grade-level content area teachers on concepts covered in their classes, allowing subjects, lessons, and experiences to reinforce each other.

Suggested Mentor Texts and Other Resources

Mentor Texts:

Grade 7 teachers will provide students with mentor texts of their own writing and exemplars written by students in previous years. Additionally, the Calkins resource listed below contains exemplars for literary

essays.

Resources:

"Style Guidelines for Formal Essays." A resource composed by GBMS ELA teachers and distributed to students.

Units of Study in Opinion, Information, and Narrative Writing:

- *"The Literary Essay." Units of Study in Argument, Information and Narrative Writing, Grade 8.* Lucy Calkins, TCRWP
- *"Writing About Reading." Units of Study in Argument, Information and Narrative Writing, Grade 7.* Lucy Calkins, TCRWP
- *"Literary Essays." Units of Study in Argument, Information and Narrative Writing, Grade 6.* Lucy Calkins, TCRWP
- *A Guide to the Common Core Writing Workshop, Intermediate Grades*. Lucy Calkins, TCRWP
- *Writing Pathways, Grades K-8, Performance Assessments and Learning Progressions*. Lucy Calkins, TCRWP
- *If...Then... Curriculum*, Grade 6 (Assessment-Based Instruction). Lucy Calkins, TCRWP
- *Resources for Teaching Writing* (DVD). Lucy Calkins, TCRWP

21st Century Skills

CRP.K-12.CRP2.1	Career-ready individuals readily access and use the knowledge and skills acquired through experience and education to be more productive. They make connections between abstract concepts with real-world applications, and they make correct insights about when it is appropriate to apply the use of an academic skill in a workplace situation.
CRP.K-12.CRP4.1	Career-ready individuals communicate thoughts, ideas, and action plans with clarity, whether using written, verbal, and/or visual methods. They communicate in the workplace with clarity and purpose to make maximum use of their own and others' time. They are excellent writers; they master conventions, word choice, and organization, and use effective tone and presentation skills to articulate ideas. They are skilled at interacting with others; they are active listeners and speak clearly and with purpose. Career-ready individuals think about the audience for their communication and prepare accordingly to ensure the desired outcome.
CRP.K-12.CRP11.1	Career-ready individuals find and maximize the productive value of existing and new technology to accomplish workplace tasks and solve workplace problems. They are flexible and adaptive in acquiring new technology. They are proficient with ubiquitous technology applications. They understand the inherent risks-personal and organizational-of technology applications, and they take actions to prevent or mitigate these risks.