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.

Standards

LA.RL.8.1	Cite the textual evidence and make relevant connections that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
LA.RL.8.2	Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text.
LA.RL.8.3	Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision.
LA.RL.8.5	Compare and contrast the structure of two or more texts and analyze how the differing structure of each text contributes to its meaning and style.
LA.RL.8.6	Analyze how differences in the points of view of the characters and the audience or reader (e.g., created through the use of dramatic irony) create such effects as suspense or humor.
LA.RI.8.1	Cite the textual evidence and make relevant connections that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
LA.RI.8.2	Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to supporting ideas; provide an objective summary of the text.
LA.RI.8.3	Analyze how a text makes connections among and distinctions between individuals, ideas, or events (e.g., through comparisons, analogies, or categories).
LA.W.8.2.B	Develop the topic with relevant, well-chosen facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.
LA.W.8.2.C	Use appropriate and varied transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.
LA.W.8.2.D	Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.
LA.W.8.2.E	Establish and maintain a formal style/academic style, approach, and form.
LA.W.8.2.F	Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented.
LA.W.8.4	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.8.5	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.8.6	Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and present the relationships between information and ideas efficiently as well as to interact and collaborate with others.
LA.W.8.10	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.8.1	Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
LA.SL.8.1.B	Follow rules for collegial discussions and decision-making, track progress toward specific goals and deadlines, and define individual roles as needed.
LA.SL.8.1.D	Acknowledge new information expressed by others, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views in light of the evidence presented.
LA.L.8.1	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
LA.L.8.2	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.
LA.L.8.2.B	Use an ellipsis to indicate an omission.
LA.L.8.2.C	Spell correctly.
LA.L.8.5.A	Interpret figures of speech (e.g., verbal irony, puns) in context.
LA.L.8.6	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 my observations in a work of literature?

3. How should I structure my essay, which conventions should I employ, and which habits must I avoid?

4. Which forms of evidence should I include in my essay?

5. How can I make the most of advice that I receive from peers and my teacher?

Application of Knowledge: Students will know that…

- A verb's voice can be either active or passive; its mood can be indicative, subjunctive, or conditional.

- 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.
- Daily practice in writing is essential for development of skills and enjoyment.
- 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…

- 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.
- Compare and contrast the elements, concepts, and effects of two or more separate works of literature.
- Complete at least the final phase of their work using digital and cloud capabilities and produce final products in digital form.
- Consider characters, events, and concepts in relationship to each other within a text.
- Discern the theme or central idea of a literary text and analyze its development throughout the work.
- Explore the role of irony in enhancing meaning and effect.
- Insert an ellipsis to indicate omitted words in a quote.
- Interpret figurative language in a text.
- 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.
- Vary the voice and mood of verbs in order to enhance nuance in their writing.
- 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

- Looking for themes all around us
- Reading closely to develop themes
- Studying the author's craft
- Drafting essays
- Critiquing your own ideas
- Integrating evidence
- Including alternative interpretations
- Symbolism
- Organizing an essay
- Adopting an essayist's tone
- Using the comma
- Comparing and contrasting two or more works of literature

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

- Spelling, capitalization, and punctuation
- Literary devices--spotlight on irony
- Relationships between characters, concepts, and events
- Making inferences
- Transition words and phrases
- Verb voice and mood
- Using the ellipsis in quotes to indicate missing words
- 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 by O. Henry, 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

On-demand 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 8, along with the pertinent content areas.

- "An Episode of War" by Stephen Crane (fiction--social studies)
- "Flowers for Algernon" by Daniel Keyes (fiction--science)
- "Who Can Replace a Man?" by Brian Aldiss (fiction--science)
- "Making Tracks on Mars" by Andrew Mishkin (nonfiction--science)
- "The Trouble with Television" by Robert MacNeil (nonfiction--social studies)
- "Baseball" by Lionel G. Garcia (nonfiction--social studies, physical education)

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 8 book-length selections and the content areas to which they pertain:

- *Night* by Elie Wiesel (nonfiction--social studies)
- *The Hound of the Baskervilles* by Arthur Conan Doyle (fiction--social studies, science)
- *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee (nonfiction--social studies)

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 8 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:

"30 Ideas for Teaching Writing." The National Writing Project. (http://www.nwp.org/cs/public/print/resource/922)

"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:

- *"Literary Essays." Units of Study in Argument, Information and Narrative Writing, Grade 8.* 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 8 (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.