Book-Length Nonfiction

Content Area: **English Language Arts**
Course(s): **English Language Arts, Generic District Course**
Time Period: **Generic Time Period**
Length: **Weeks**
Status: **Published**

Unit Overview

Students will read and discuss book-length works of literary nonfiction. Activities revolve around daily class reading. Students typically pair up in order to take detailed literary notes. Students then have daily opportunities to share insights, questions, and observations with the class. Teachers may group students in Literature Circles in order to investigate concepts in greater depth. Additionally, teachers may make vocabulary lists a collaborative effort and apply the Writing Workshop approach to essays connected with this unit. The social interaction of these activities ensures a wide field of viewpoints and ideas; students demonstrate their learning in collaboration with each other, but they must also do so on an individual basis as they apply vocabulary words, compose articulate and analytic essays, and identify literary elements at work in the text.

Gifted classes in English Language Arts have an approach to literature and reading that differs from that of regular classes in the following ways:

- Gifted classes naturally engage in critical thought even beyond the already high standard of regular classes, and teachers add special emphasis to the critical-thinking components of the standard scoring rubrics.
- Gifted classes include a wider array of related topics and cross-curricular connections when exploring meaning in what they read (see *Integrated/Cross Disciplinary Instruction* and *Resources*).
- Gifted classes include opportunities for students to engage in peer instruction, placing the teacher at times in the role of facilitator. This capitalizes on the strong intrinsic motivation of the gifted child.
- Gifted classes require from all students more initiative and independence, while incorporating structured group activities to provide synthesis from and integration of individual efforts.

Standards

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.1	Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.2	Determine a theme or central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.3	Describe how a particular story's or drama's plot unfolds in a series of episodes as well as how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.4	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.5	Analyze how a particular sentence, chapter, scene, or stanza fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of the theme, setting, or plot.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.6	Explain how an author develops the point of view of the narrator or speaker in a text.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.7	Compare and contrast the experience of reading a story, drama, or poem to listening to or viewing an audio, video, or live version of the text, including contrasting what they “see” and “hear” when reading the text to what they perceive when they listen or watch.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.8	(Not applicable to literature)
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.9	Compare and contrast texts in different forms or genres (e.g., stories and poems; historical novels and fantasy stories) in terms of their approaches to similar themes and topics.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.10	By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 6–8 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6.2	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6.2.a	Introduce a topic; organize ideas, concepts, and information, using strategies such as definition, classification, comparison/contrast, and cause/effect; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., charts, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6.2.b	Develop the topic with relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6.2.c	Use appropriate transitions to clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6.2.d	Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6.2.e	Establish and maintain a formal style.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6.2.f	Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from the information or explanation presented.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6.4	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6.5	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.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6.6	Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing as well as to interact and collaborate with others; demonstrate sufficient command of keyboarding skills to type a minimum of three pages in a single sitting.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6.10	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 discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.6.1	Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 6 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.6.1.a	Come to discussions prepared, having read or studied required material; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence on the topic, text, or issue to probe and reflect on ideas under discussion.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.6.1.b	Follow rules for collegial discussions, set specific goals and deadlines, and define individual roles as needed.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.6.1.c	Pose and respond to specific questions with elaboration and detail by making comments that contribute to the topic, text, or issue under discussion.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.6.2	Interpret information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how it contributes to a topic, text, or issue under study.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.6.4	Present claims and findings, sequencing ideas logically and using pertinent descriptions, facts, and details to accentuate main ideas or themes; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.6.5	Include multimedia components (e.g., graphics, images, music, sound) and visual displays in presentations to clarify information.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.6.6	Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.6.1	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.6.2	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.6.3	Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.6.4	Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 6 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.6.4.a	Use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence or paragraph; a word's position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.6.4.b	Use common, grade-appropriate Greek or Latin affixes and roots as clues to the meaning of a word (e.g., audience, auditory, audible).
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.6.4.c	Consult reference materials (e.g., dictionaries, glossaries, thesauruses), both print and digital, to find the pronunciation of a word or determine or clarify its precise meaning or its part of speech.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.6.5	Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.6.5.a	Interpret figures of speech (e.g., personification) in context.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.6.5.b	Use the relationship between particular words (e.g., cause/effect, part/whole, item/category) to better understand each of the words.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.6.5.c	Distinguish among the connotations (associations) of words with similar denotations (definitions) (e.g., stingy, scrimping, economical, unwasteful, thrifty).
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.6.6	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

How do extended works of nonfiction organize information around central ideas?

How can real-life people in a nonfiction work be similar in their transformations to literary characters?

Why do some works of nonfiction carry more informational authority than others?

Why does a reader's individual response to a work of literary nonfiction provoke thought and growth?

How does group discussion influence and individual's response, thought, and growth?

Why would literary elements such as conflict, irony, symbolism, and metaphor appear in a work of nonfiction?

Application of Knowledge and Skills...

Students will know that...

Students will know that:

- information in a work of extended nonfiction supports a central idea.
- individuals, events, and concepts develop and interact throughout a nonfiction text.
- works of nonfiction vary in their credibility and authority.
- as individuals, we can grow as we engage with a text and analyze it.
- the social act of literary discussion enhances not only the participants' learning and growth with respect to one book but also each individual's understanding of additional literature that they read on their own.
- literary elements such as conflict, irony, symbolism, and metaphor apply to nonfiction accounts as well as to literary fiction--and similarly enhance central ideas.
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- works of nonfiction vary in their credibility and authority.

Students will be skilled at...

Students will be able to:

- analyze and explain the conceptual structure of a work of nonfiction with respect to its central ideas and its author's likely intent.
- trace and evaluate the development of events and arguments in a work of nonfiction.
- assess the validity of information and the persuasiveness of arguments presented in a work of nonfiction.
- analyze a text and synthesize concepts in spoken and written response to critical questions.
- apply insights revealed in group discussions to their own analysis of literature and express those

insights verbally and in writing
- explain in discussion and in writing the ways in which literary elements such as conflict, irony, symbolism, and foils enhance the literary impact of a work of nonfiction.

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Assessments

Reading Exploration Sheets
Formative: Other written assessments

After daily class reading, students work together to compose notes on each chapter. These notes include a short summary, questions, comments, literary devices, and challenging vocabulary. The teacher periodically assesses the thoughtfulness and thoroughness of these notes.

Literature Circles
Formative: Other oral assessments

In weekly Literature Circles, students discuss questions, insights, and literary elements. Students use their Reading Exploration Sheets to keep track of what they wish to contribute, but they must take care that their discussion is not a mere recitation of what is on their sheets. The discussion must be dynamic and energetic.

At times, students consult each other regarding strategies for writing essays connected with the reading. This is acceptable so long as the discussion does not become little more than a Writing Workshop conference.

Some teachers may desire more structure for Literature Circles in their classes. If so, they can assign the following roles to each student: master of ceremonies, literary term wizard, vocabulary czar, summarizer, and passage picker.

Vocabulary Assessments
Summative: Written Test

Students collaborate with the teacher on vocabulary lists at various stages in the unit. The teacher then publishes an official list, and students take tests requiring them to put words into sentences that show each word's correct meaning and use.

Comprehension Quizzes
Summative: Written Test

For some chapters, students will read individually and answer questions that demonstrate comprehension of main idea, plot elements, literary devices, vocabulary, and making inferences.

Essay Responses to Open-Ended Questions
Formative: Extended Essay

Students respond to open-ended questions with thoughtful, thorough, elaborate essays that demonstrate basic comprehension, critical thinking, advanced writing skills, and adherence to formal writing guidelines.

Literary Term Test
Summative: Written Test

After reading for the novel has concluded, students identify literary terms whose examples from the story are provided.

Committee Presentations
Formative: Other oral assessments

Some teachers may choose to apply an enrichment component to this unit, grouping students in committees, with each committee charged with jobs like the following:

Vocabulary committee—compose, in consultation with the teacher and with suggestions from classmates, vocabulary lists and preparation sheets that will assist students in preparing for tests. The words come directly from the text that they are reading.

Literary elements committee—prepare biweekly presentations on literary devices at work in the text they are reading.

Plot and character analysis committee—prepare biweekly presentations that provide analysis of characters and plot.

Connections committee—prepare biweekly presentations that illustrate connections between the text they are reading and other content areas.

Assessment Instruments:
Students self-assessments of their own work in committees

Teacher assessment of students' overall work in preparation and presentation

Peer assessments of committee presentations

- Assessment Rubric for Reading Exploration Sheets
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- Assessment Rubric for Literature Circle Participation
- Blank Vocabulary Test
- Assesment Rubrics for Self-Assessment, Peer Assessment, and Teacher Assessment

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Activities

Possible classroom activities may include, but are not limited to, the following:

Daily review of essential questions

Classroom reading, note-taking, discussion

Independent reading and note-taking

Deep inquiry into vocabulary, literary devices, social/cultural influences, and plot elements in the novel

Literature Circle discussions between small groups of peers

Essay responses to open-ended questions with peer conferences to assist with composition and editing

Investigation of cross-curricular connections

Committee presentations on concepts and topics related to the reading with self-assessment and peer review of presentations

Enrichment lessons and activities on advanced literary concepts and cross-curricular connections presented by the teacher

Activities to Differentiate Instruction

Peer-review of essays, paired note-taking sessions, and Literature Circle discussions all enable students of

different conceptual perspectives to combine resources.

Structured activities between peers (Literature Circles, paired note-taking sessions) activate the social element of learning.

Discussion(auditory), notes and handouts (visual), and online investigation of Web resources (kinesthetic) allow for a variety of induction modes.

Emphasis of historical, cultural, literary, political, and social influences in a work of nonfiction will allow students' individual preferences and interests to enhance their processing of the story. Enrichment instruction on these topics may take the form of individual student investigations, committee presentations (using the Literature Symposium model), and/or supplementary lessons provided by the teacher.

Integrated/Cross-Disciplinary Instruction

Teachers (or the Connections Committee, for teachers who set up Literature Symposium Committees) may wish to include investigations of various cross-curricular topics that come up in connection with the texts covered this year.

Resources

Teacher Website (for assignments and expectations)

Pearson Prentice Hall *Literature*, Grade 6

Approved book-length works of literary nonfiction:

Macaulay, David. *Cathedral: The Story of Its Construction* 1120 L

Essential questions related to the texts.

Assignment guidelines, activity objectives, and scoring rubrics provided by teachers.