

Unit 5- Interpreting Text Sets/Social Issues

Content Area: **English Language Arts**
Course(s): **English Language Arts**
Time Period: **Generic Time Period**
Length: **7-8 Weeks**
Status: **Published**

Unit Overview

In the Unit Interpreting Text Sets/Social Issues students will advance their interpretations for motivations of character's actions and theories about characters, events, and places in their novels into bigger ideas such as determining the central ideas or themes of a text. Students will learn that good books are about more than one idea, and that ideas live in more than one book, and we call those ideas themes. Once students are able to recognize themes, they will learn how to compare themes that are developed in different texts. This unit begins with students revisiting familiar texts and thinking about the ideas these texts suggest. Then students think about texts that are united thematically alongside of each other, and investigate how different authors developed a theme. In addition, students will then apply analytical lenses for interpretations that focuses on symbolism and literary craft. Finally, students will recognize that texts often address the same theme and students will notice different nuances in the message of the author. Students will then be able to contrast how authors present or develop a meaning, theme, or character-first in conversation, and then in writing. After interpretations the next bend of the unit is Social Issues Book Clubs. This is a continuation of the inter-textuality work on themes and ideas, and encourages readers to shift from reading for plot towards reading for ideas. Social Issues refers to issues that affect a lot of people, not just one character. Examples include: fitting in, peer pressure, poverty, homelessness, joblessness, bullying, and racism. It will be important to ensure that you leave the discovering of repeated themes and issues of injustice to the discovering of the students. Students will move away from sequential retelling, and develop a lens for determining importance in a story as they focus on the struggles characters face. Finally, students will apply their aptitude for interpretation and social issues into the real world, applying it to all they read.

Standards

LA.4.CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.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.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4.2	Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text; summarize the text.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4.9	Compare and contrast the treatment of similar themes and topics (e.g., opposition of good and evil) and patterns of events (e.g., the quest) in stories, myths, and traditional literature from different cultures.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4.10	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.

Essential Questions

- How do readers consider the implications of the stories?
- How are themes that are the same across books developed differently?
- What is the meaning of symbolism and literary devices and their relationship to the theme of stories?

- How does reading teach us about issues that exist in the world and in our lives?
- How do readers read with a lens and talk back to the text?
- How do readers bring lenses to our world?

Application of Knowledge: Students will know that...

- good readers don't read just to find out what characters do or what happens in stories. Powerful readers also realize that the stories we read are about ideas-they literally teach us how to live.
- just as we can study how the settings of stories that share themes are usually different, that difference has implications for how the theme develops in the story, there are usually differences also in characters-in their backgrounds, their perspectives and points of views, and their traits.
- readers find issues in a story by asking "What does this story teach me?"
- readers look at anything they read and wonder how hidden and subtle sources of power, race, class, and gender operate in our culture.
- readers write and talk about issues they can relate to in their own lives, each of us is a member of many groups-how does that group identity shape us?
- repetition is a tool that is not only used in poetry but in literature as well and it's not just objects that may be repeated in a text, sometimes it is lines, and parallel scenes or moments. When we read with a lens, first we read for the story, for what happens, and then we read asking what does this story teach us about (the social issue)?
- when characters experience strong emotions and/or make critical choices readers have an opportunity to learn from the decisions characters make, and can make more than one interpretation that may turn out to be significant.

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

- apply analytical lenses for interpretation that focus on symbolism and literary craft.
- compare themes that are developed across different texts.
- determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze the development of these themes.
- recognize how authors present themes differently, and contrast how the theme was presented or developed first in conversations, then in writing.

Teaching Points and Suggested Activities

The following teaching points and activities are adapted from *Units of Study for Teaching Reading Grade 4*, specifically *If... Then... Curriculum* for this unit (Calkins et al., 2015). The manuals serve as a loose framework for teachers, who will add and/or emphasize based on their students' needs.

Teaching Points

- teach students that powerful readers know that reading is much more than finding out what characters do or what happens in stories. We know that stories are about ideas and those ideas have the power to

teach us life lessons. We may, therefore, reconsider stories we've lived or read, and rethink them in terms of the lessons or ideas they suggest. We keep in mind that good stories are about more than one idea. There may be many possible meanings of a story.

- teach students that as a reader, it is especially worth paying attention to moments where characters experience strong emotions or where characters make critical choices. These are the places where we as readers may learn significant lessons.
- teach students that as readers, we revise our original ideas as the story develops. We expect to back up our ideas with evidence from the text, and we mark, collect, and ponder moments in the text that support our ideas.
- teach students that just as stories are about more than one idea, ideas live in more than one story. We can find the same idea across different texts—stories, nonfiction and even our life stories. Readers begin to compare texts that share similar themes, recalling texts we've already read, and remaining alert to new texts, both literary and nonfiction that seem to deal with similar ideas, issues, or themes. Issues hide within the pages of books we know well. Good readers know how to spot issues and think about them as we read.
- teach students that readers read about these issues keeping in mind how characters react to and deal with them. We keep track of this information on post-its or in a reading notebook.
- teach students that readers realize that while stories may share the same theme, there are still many differences between stories that are worth studying. One difference we may focus on, is setting—differences in the time and place where stories happen. Readers understand that these differences affect the meaning.
- teach students that as readers begin to compare texts, we often need to develop some systems to help us recall the texts we've read. Sometimes making charts that list the titles, issues or themes, and characters, helps us to quickly recall texts so that we can move to analyzing them. This supports us as we revisit important parts of a text we've read before and place these parts against ones we are reading now. We think across these parts by noting what's similar, what's different and how this affects our ideas.

Activities to Support Teaching Points

- create and refer to anchor charts
- study pages from exemplar reader's notebooks
- provide and present mentor texts as models
- teach the *Work of Readers* Charts
- teach children strategies for holding onto text, for example by using Post-its and graphic organizers
- model (Talk Aloud) the strategies good readers use
- model, provide, and use a reader's notebook
- tap, sketch, or jot across a story as a way of retaining information and details
- study book introductions and endings
- practice creating mental movies as you read
- investigate figurative language and descriptive vocabulary and how authors use them
- Turn and Talk the dialogue in a story to bring the characters' feelings alive
- set mini-reading goals for engagement, print work, fluency, comprehension, and/or conversation
- provide checklists and reading progressions to assess and develop on-going reading goals
- scaffold skills with strategies, for example using Post-its to identify key elements of a chapter
- write long about reading
- practice alternating the speed a text is read to reflect tone and mood
- plan to celebrate the conclusion of classroom reading projects
- use technology in the reading classroom; for example digital journals

Assessments

Assessment in this unit takes three forms: diagnostic, formative, and summative. The resource *Reading Pathways, Grades 3-5*, provides reading progressions, performance assessments, rubrics, tools for collecting data, a system for conducting running records, There are also downloadable, digital versions of the assessment tools available through the online resources at; www.readingandwritingproject.org/resources. Teachers may also develop their own rubrics and assessments in order to include more specific elements of knowledge and skills listed in this unit summary.

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.

On-going teacher assessment will take place in the context of a conference. Conferences, both small group and one-to-one conferring, are used to reinforce expectations, provide advice and/or assistance, and ultimately, to support growth.

Diagnostic Assessments

Running Records

www.readingandwritingproject.org/resources/assessments/running-records

Spelling Inventory

www.readingandwritingproject.org/resources/assessments/spelling-assessments

Individual beginning of the year "How's It Going?" conferences

Formative Assessments

Teacher-student conferences including: individual, small group, strategy group, and guided reading

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

Students' conversation with partners during Turn and Talk segment of mini-lessons.

Reading logs, Reader's Notebooks, Writing About Reading evidence (Post-its, journal entries, writing long about reading, for example)

Summative Assessment

Teacher-student conferences

Running Records

Spelling Assessments

Reading logs, Reader's Notebooks, and other evidence of students improving skills

Activities to Differentiate Instruction

- provide leveled books appropriate for all reading levels
- provide support as needed through conferencing
- provide support as needed through strategy groups
- provide support as needed through guided reading groups
- provide individualized copies of teaching charts
- provide modified and/or alternate grade level checklists and rubrics to scaffold or stretch learning
- scaffold or stretch learning through the use of various strategies
- provide appropriate reading partners

Challenge gifted students to incorporate more complex reading techniques based on the 5th grade Reading Learning Progressions:

- base predictions on what the readers knows about the genre of fictional texts and predict not just what will happen to the main character, but also to the secondary characters across multiple plotlines.
- realize that in more complicated stories, the reader sometimes has to wait longer for the parts to fit together or for things to become more clear, At these points, the reader may reread to figure out how the parts of the story fit together, but also read on with questions in mind.
- alert that stories are not always told sequentially; note backstory, gaps in time between scenes, flashback and flash-forward, and subplots.
- name a theme and then summarize the most important parts of the story that support that theme.
- see places in a story where the characters are not what they seem at first.

Integrated/Cross-Disciplinary Instruction

Writing Workshop

- apply language and ideas from read alouds and independent reading
- utilize read alouds and independent reading as mentor texts
- apply spelling strategies
- identify areas of spelling needs
- apply grammar skills
- identify areas in need of addressing (spelling, grammar, mechanics)
- expand written vocabulary from read alouds and independent reading
- model sentence and paragraph structure after mentor texts

Content Areas: Science, Social Studies, Health

- read just right books in the content areas
- use mentor texts to deliver Social Studies content
- compare content area ideas and issues to what our characters deal with in our read alouds and mentor texts
- apply reading skills and strategies to the reading we do in the content areas

Study Skills

- use graphic organizers to support reading
- use checklists and rubrics to monitor progress
- use Venn diagrams and t-charts to gather, compare, and contrast events
- use highlighters, note cards, post-its, and other tools to keep track of story events, details, and ideas
- keep a log and notebook

The Arts

- analyze illustrations in books for details
- compare illustrations to other forms of art
- illustrate a passage that was just read to show details, ideas, and lessons
- act out a scene from a book to better visualize how a character feels

Suggested Mentor Texts and Other Resources

Mentor Texts

Bullying

Blubber by Judy Blume

How to Eat Fried Worms by Thomas Rockwell

Jake Drake, Bully Buster by Andrew Clements

The Janitor's Boy by Andrew Clements

Max Quigley, Technically Not a Bully by James Roy

The PS Brothers by Maribeth Boelts

Wonder by RJ Palacio

Courage and Honor

Catwings by Ursula LeGuin

Felita by Nicholasa Mohr

Fourth Grade Rats by Jerry Spinelli

The Hundred Penny Box by Sharon Bell Mathis

The One and Only Ivan by Katherine Applegate

The Real Boy by Anne Ursu

Speak Up, Spike! by Franzeska Ewart

There's A Boy in the Girl's Bathroom by Louis Sachar

The Thing About Georgie by Lisa Graff

Impact on the World

14 Cows for America by Carmen Deedy

Brothers in Hope by Mary Williams

Harvesting Hope by Kathleen Krull

Hound Dog True by Linda Urban

The Jacket by Andrew Clements

Judy Moody Saves the World by Megan McDonald

The Lucky Stone by Lucille Clifton

Fitting In

Bystander by James Preller

The Hundred Dresses by Eleanor Estes

A Mouse Called Wolf by Dick King-Smith

Out of My Mind by Sharon Draper

Rules by Cynthia Lord

Ringer by Jerry Spinelli

Overcoming Obstacles

Clementine, Friend of the Week by Sara Pennypacker

Dear Mr. Henshaw by Beverly Clearly

How to Steal a Dog by Barbara O'Connor

The Mightly Miss Malone by Christopher Paul Curtis

Forgiveness

Fame and Glory in Freedom, Georgia by Barbara O'Connor

The Great Unexpected by Sharon Creech

I Am Not Joey Pigza by Jack Gantos

J.T. by Jane Wagner

Growing Up

Claudia and Mean Janine by Ann M. Martin

Dexter the Tough by Maragret Peterson Haddix

Donuthead by Sue Stauffacher

Herbie Jones by Suzy Kline

Junebug by Alice Mead

Piper Reed, Navy Brat by Kimberly Willis Holt

The Report Card by Andrew Clements

Superfudge by Judy Blume

Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing by Judy Blume

Divorce and Changing Families

The Boy on the Porch by Sharon Creech

Flora and Ulysses by Kate DiCamillo

Go Fish by Mary Stolz

Lexie by Audrey Couloubis

Resources

Units of Study for Teaching Reading:

- *Building a Reading Life* by Lucy Calkins and Kathleen Tolan
- *A Guide to the Reading Workshop, Intermediate Grades*; Lucy Calkins
- *Reading Pathways, Grades 3-5, Performance Assessments and Learning Progressions*; Lucy Calkins
- *If...Then... Curriculum: Assessment-Based Instruction, Grades 3-5*; Lucy Calkins; Julia Mooney; and Colleagues From the TCRWP
- *Online Resources for Teaching Writing*; Lucy Calkins
- website: www.readingandwritingproject.org/resources

The Art of Teaching Reading; Lucy Calkins

The Reading Strategies Book: Your Everything Guide to Developing Skilled Readers; Jennifer Serravallo

Leveled Books, K-8: Matching Texts to Readers for Effective Teaching; Irene C. Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell

Reading Miscue Inventory: From Evaluation to Instruction; Yetta M. Goodman

Miscue Analysis Made Easy: Building on Student Strengths; Sandra Wilde

Around the Reading Workshop in 180 Days; Frank Serafini

The Book Whisperer: Awakening the Inner Reader in Every Child; Donalyn Miller

Mindsets and Moves: Strategies That Help Readers Take Charge; Gravity Goldberg

Guiding Readers and Writers, Grades 3-6; Irene C Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell

Smarter Charts; Marjorie Martinelli