

# Niagara Falls or Does It?

Content Area: **English Language Arts**  
Course(s): **Language Arts 6**  
Time Period: **November**  
Length: **4-6 weeks**  
Status: **Published**

## Unit Summary

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For Hank, school does not start out on the right foot. On the very first day of school, he gets called to the principal's office for being tardy. His teacher is a nightmare and instead of helping him, she yells and makes rude comments. The first assignment his teacher gives him is to write five paragraphs on "What You Did This Summer." Hank is terrified; writing one good sentence is difficult for him, so how in the world is he going to write five whole paragraphs?

Hank comes up with a plan: instead of *writing* what he did on vacation, he'll *show* what he did. But when Hank's "living essay" becomes a living disaster, he finds himself in detention. Strangely enough, however, detention ends up becoming a turning point in his life.

This unit begins as a read aloud of [Niagara Falls or Does It?](#), and provides the springboard for many of the reading skills they will be working on throughout the year, including; literal comprehension, plot, characterization, inferencing, predicting, identifying and interpreting figurative language, determining and supporting their thinking by using textual evidence. Students also begin to work on becoming more independent readers by using memory and stamina strategies. Depending on the students' reading levels, they may begin to read portions of the books independently and demonstrate comprehension. Students will begin to use bookmarks to track their recording and to record their thinking and the plot. Upon completion of the read aloud, students will then choose another novel from this series, in which they will make comparisons.

While students are working on this unit, they will also be working on writing their Ancient China research projects. Throughout this unit, students will also be working on using the RACE response while answering open ended novel questions.

## Standards

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| LA.L.6.2   | Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.   |
| LA.L.6.2.A | Use punctuation (commas, parentheses, dashes) to set off nonrestrictive/parenthetical elements.  |
| LA.L.6.2.B | Spell correctly.   |
| LA.L.6.3   | Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.   |
| LA.L.6.3.A | Vary sentence patterns for meaning (syntax), reader/listener interest, and style/voice.  |
| LA.L.6.3.B | Maintain consistency in style and tone.  |
| LA.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. |
| LA.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.          |
| LA.L.6.5   | Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.  |
| LA.L.6.5.A | Interpret figures of speech (e.g., personification) in context.  |
| LA.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.

- LA.L.6.5.C Distinguish among the connotations (associations) of words with similar denotations (definitions) (e.g., stingy, scrimping, economical, unwasteful, thrifty).
- LA.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.
- LA.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.
- LA.W.6.2.A Introduce a topic and organize ideas, concepts, and information, using text structures (e.g., definition, classification, comparison/contrast, cause/effect, etc.) and text features (e.g., headings, graphics, and multimedia) when useful to aiding comprehension.
- LA.W.6.2.B Develop the topic with relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.
- LA.W.6.2.C Use appropriate transitions to clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.
- LA.W.6.2.D Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.
- LA.W.6.2.E Establish and maintain a formal/academic style, approach, and form.
- LA.W.6.2.F Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from the information or explanation presented.
- LA.W.6.4 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.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.
- LA.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.
- LA.W.6.9.A Apply grade 6 Reading standards to literature (e.g., “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”).
- LA.W.6.10 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.RL.6.1 Cite 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.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.
- LA.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.
- LA.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.
- LA.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.
- LA.RL.6.6 Explain how an author develops the point of view of the narrator or speaker in a text.
- LA.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.
- LA.RL.6.9 Compare, contrast and reflect on (e.g., practical knowledge, historical/cultural context,

and background knowledge) 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.

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| LA.RL.6.10       | By the end of the year read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems at grade level text-complexity or above, scaffolding as needed.   |
| LA.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. |
| LA.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.           |
| LA.SL.6.1.B      | Follow rules for collegial discussions, set specific goals and deadlines, and define individual roles as needed.  |
| LA.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.  |
| LA.SL.6.1.D      | Review the key ideas expressed and demonstrate understanding of multiple perspectives through reflection and paraphrasing.  |
| CAEP.9.2.8.B.3   | Evaluate communication, collaboration, and leadership skills that can be developed through school, home, work, and extracurricular activities for use in a career.  |
| TECH.8.1.8.A.CS1 | Understand and use technology systems.  |
| TECH.8.1.8.A.CS2 | Select and use applications effectively and productively.   |
| TECH.8.1.8.D.CS2 | Demonstrate personal responsibility for lifelong learning.  |

## Student Learning Objectives

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- The students will learn to summarize chapters and use summaries to follow the novel's plot.
- The students will learn to use context clues to determine meaning of vocabulary and figurative language.
- The students will learn to use textual evidence to support predictions and inferences.
- The students will learn to analyze and update their predictions.
- The students will learn to use the RACE response when responding to open ended questions.

## Essential Questions

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- Why should kids read novels?
- How can I help other students improve their ability to stay focused while reading novels?
- How does a character's choices effect the plot and outcome of a story?
- What strategies work best for me when reading independently?
- What is figurative language and how does it help paint a clearer picture?
- What is context and how do I use it to better understand vocabulary and figurative language? How does it help me to improve my understanding of text?
- How can I better express myself in writing?

## Enduring Understandings

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- Students will understand that ideas can be conveyed through writing.
- Students will understand that it is okay to revise predictions.
- Students will understand that evidence is key for supporting and convincing an audience.
- Students will understand that an opinion is okay, but supporting your thinking with relevant research and experience is important.
- Students will understand that using context clues enhances understanding.
- Students will understand that it is important to support their thinking when writing responses.

## Application

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- Students will be able to independently use their learning to read longer amounts of text with comprehension.
- Students will be able to independently use their learning to use context clues to determine logical meanings on unknown vocabulary.
- Students will be able to independently use their learning to use context clues to interpret figurative language.
- Students will be able to independently use their learning to use evidence from text to support their thinking.
- Students will be able to independently use their learning to write cohesive responses.

## Skills

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Students will be skilled at...

- Utilizing context clues.
- Interpreting figurative language.
- Revising predictions.
- Reading independently.
- Comprehending text.
- Utilizing the RACE response.