Unit 1 - The Hero's Journey: Social Commentary through Superhero Literature

Content Area: **English Language Arts**
Course(s):
Time Period: **Marking Period 1**
Length: **4-5 Weeks**
Status: **Published**

Brief Summary of Unit

After a brief introduction to visual literacy, students will analyze superhero graphic novels and how, through the hero's journey, they comment on society. Students will explore how author's utilize the hero's journey and other narrative conventions to craft complex themes. Additionally, students will analyze the visual language of graphic novels and how it may be minipulated to create mood. Through a combination of whole class novels and literature circles, students will be tasked with writing journals, short and long academic essays culminating in an informational video analysis or vlog of a superhero graphic novel.

Interdisciplinary Connections and Career Readiness: This unit is designed to be part of a developmental progression across grade levels and make interdisciplinary connections across content areas including physical and social sciences, technology, career readiness, cultural awareness, and global citizenship. During this course, students are provided with opportunities to develop skills that pertain to a variety of careers. When completing this course, students can make informed choices and pursue electives that further their study and contribute toward the formation of career interest.

Revision: June 2023

Essential Questions

- How do internal monologue and dialogue reveal characterization?
- How do the use of literary devices and figurative language contribute to a theme’s complexity?
- How do themes reflect societal concerns?
- How does an analysis of character, setting and conflict help clarify thematic ideas?
- How does an author’s intended use of symbols add layers of depth to the development of themes?
- How is an author’s life reflected in his/her work?
- How is the hero's journey utilized in graphic novels to create social commentary?
- How is visual literacy used to manipulate mood and tone?
- Must heroes be flawless?
- What is the hero's journey?
- What is visual literacy?
- Why do superheros resonate with society?

Enduring Understandings

- Analysis of graphic novels may increase a readers visual literacy.
- An author’s life experiences affect his story-lines and themes.
- Different works may be connected via common themes.
- Linear and nonlinear storytelling contribute to the mood, tone, and theme of a graphic novel.
- Writing requires planning, revising, editing, rewriting, and improves with synthesis.

Students Will Know

- An author or artist’s style, diction and syntax have an effect on a reader’s understanding of characterization, conflict, setting and theme.
- An author’s life experiences affect his story-lines and themes.
- Different works may be connected via common themes.
- Effective literary analysis necessitates citation of textual proof (quoted material).
- General biographical information about authors’ lives and how it may influence a work.
- Historical background of the time period in which a work is set and how it may influence a work.
- How to properly organize body paragraphs to prove a thesis statement.
- Key terms associated with a novel or graphic novel: gutter, bleed, frame, transition, word to picture dynamic, panel, splash, exposition, rising action, climax, resolution, flashback, allusion, tragedy, tragic hero, hero's journey, internal and external conflict, epiphany, catharsis, frame story, point of view.
- Literary and figurative devices such as alliteration, mood, tone, imagery, simile, metaphor, personification, irony, symbolism, hyperbole, paradox, oxymoron.
- Modern Language Association formats as they apply to literary analysis.
- Themes are developed over the course of a work through characterization, conflict, and setting.

Students Will Be Skilled At

- analyzing different mediums and formats of literature.
- close reading of graphic fiction texts.
- comparing and contrasting different works of literature in regards to craft and structure.
- creating connections between two or more texts.
- drawing conclusions, making predictions, and using inference skills to analyze a text.
- identifying meanings of words and use them effectively when writing and speaking.
- organizing the sequence of their writing to make arguments and evidence clear.
- participating in literature circle discussions and activities.
- reading and comprehending literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 11–12 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.
- recognizing connections between the text and themselves or their society.
- summarizing the main idea of a passage or nonfiction work.

- using guidelines on a rubric for peer and self-evaluation.
- using textual evidence to support claims in essays or paragraphs.
- utilizing textual evidence to analyze visual works.

Evidence/Performance Tasks

Developmental progression across years in both reading and writing is evidenced by multiple benchmark assessment screeners, administered two times per year. Follow up diagnostic assessments are used to target skill remediation. Student proficiency allows for additional or alternative assessment based on demonstration or absence of skill.

Students demonstrate differentiated proficiency through both formative and summative assessments in the classroom. Based on individual student readiness and performance, assessments can be implemented as formative and/or summative.

The performance tasks listed below are examples of the types of assessments teachers may use in the classroom and the data collected by the district to track student progress.

Formative:

- Teacher Observations
- Accountable Talk, Socratic Seminars/Fish Bowls
- Analysis of multimodal text sets
- Analysis of critical commentary, literary criticism
- Writers Notebook (quick writes/drafts/prewrites), emphasizing author's craft
- Close reading analysis of text using evidence as substantiation
- Conferences: Individual and small group, accompanying conference notes
- Reflective exercises and assessments
- Oral Reading and Interpretation
- Peer and self-evaluations of learning
- Entrance and Exit Tickets
- Open-Ended Responses in Journal
- Textual Analysis Reading Responses
- Dialectical Journal
- Rhetorical Precis
- SOAPSTone Analysis

Summative, including Alternative Assessments:

- On-demand Writing Assessments, timed and untimed
- Researched Presentations
- Performance Assessments
- Project-based Learning
- Problem-based Learning

- Personalized Learning
- Visual Literacy Prompts
- Digital Portfolios
- Online Discussion Forums
- Analytical and Expository Essay

Benchmark:

- Benchmark reading and writing assessments, scored using rubrics, district-created and standards-aligned; based on NJSLA, reported twice per year
- Engage in text set analysis using visual literacy and close reading analysis strategies to compose a claim and use evidence as support
- Grade-level Standards-based Rubrics
- Common Lit Reading Benchmark Assessments, three times per year (grades 9-11)
- Advanced Placement tests (grades 11-12)
- NJGPA (grade 11)
- NJSLA (grade 9)
- PSAT (grades 10-11)
- SAT (grades 11-12)
- Final Exam
- IXL

- Accountable Talk, Socratic Seminars/Fish Bowls.
- Analysis of multimodal text sets.
- Answer Essential Questions.
- Cite and interpret quoted material from the text and from literary criticism.
- Close reading analysis of text using evidence as substantiation.
- Conferences: Individual and small group, accompanying conference notes.
- Create artistic, interactive and/or multimedia projects that suggest an understanding of the text beyond its literal meaning.
- Create essays of literary analysis using proper MLA formats and documentation.
- Determine themes though an analysis of characters.
- Entrance and Exit Tickets.
- Evaluate societal concerns reflected through plot and theme.
- Grade-level Standards-based Rubrics.
- Identify character motivation and inter-relationships via open-ended and objective quizzes.
- Identify meaning of words used in context.
- On-demand Writing Assessments, timed and untimed.
- Online Discussion Forums.
- Open-Ended Responses in Journal.
- Participate in large and small group discussions.
- Participate in peer and teacher/student critiques to revise and edit their essays.

- Peer and self-evaluations of learning.
- Performance Assessments.
- Personalized Learning.
- Problem-based Learning.
- Project-based Learning.
- Reflective exercises and assessments.
- Teacher Observations.
- Trace the sequence of events in a work.
- Visual Literacy Prompts.
- Work collaboratively on assignments.
- Writers Notebook (quick writes/drafts/prewrites), emphasizing author's craft.

Learning Plan

Instructional time for reading will be divided into thirds; one third of the time will be dedicated to whole class text instruction; one third will include literature circles; one third, independent reading. The intent is for student-readers to have clear modelling through whole-class instruction. These strategies are practiced through literature circles in a group setting of peers and through independent practice monitored through teacher conferencing with students. An emphasis will be based on the transfer of skills instruction, teaching the reader, not merely the content of the text. The text complexity and rigor of reading will be appropriate for grade 11-12; materials selection for whole-class and literature circles will be from the book list approved by the Board of Education. Classrooms will house rich and diverse independent reading libraries of both contemporary and canonical works.

The reading of text targets not only comprehension, but also analysis. Students will read both long-and short-form, exceprted and full-length, print and electronic, fiction and nonfiction texts. Study will include the analysis of visual texts including film clips, art, infographic, maps, charts, graphs, cartoons, graphic novel. Technique and terminology specific to a genre of reading is examined. Research tasks are embedded throughout the year and a minimum of one task is completed during each unit. Vocabulary instruction will be chosen from the reading material.

Students write a variety of informational texts. Various forms of writing including digital writing are emphasized as well. Grammar instruction is embedded in writing instruction through mini-lessons, holding students accountable for skills taught and practiced; modelling is done through mentor texts, both published and student-crafted. Teachers focus on process in addition to product with an emphasis on synthesizing texts with nuanced understanding; teacher-created multi-modal text sets will be used as materials. High-and low-stakes, timed and untimed pieces are all important.

Teachers may personalize instruction during this unit and address the distinct learning needs, interests, aspirations, or cultural backgrounds of individual students.

This unit of study focuses on the Hero's Journey and informational writing.

Potential Lesson Plans/Activites may include:

- Visual literacy analysis and support activity.
- Graphic novel terminology and technique review. Have students identify various graphic novel techniques and then have students, in groups, recreate a subsection of those techniques for the class to identify.
- Provide background information and essential question for a whole class graphic novel.
- Utilize text free graphic novel excerpts and ask students to analyze the images and text separately before analyzing the two together.
- Conduct guided reading and discussion of initial portions of a group text.
- Review the hero's journey and have students analyze one of the characters from the text using that framework.
- Define and analyze social commentary, symbolism, metaphor and other literary terms.
- In partnerships, small groups, jigsaw groupings, and Socratic circles, discuss the development of structure, language, rhetorical techniques, visual techniques, and thematic concepts.
- Synthesize information from nonfiction texts, poems, and images relating to theme.
- Conduct short analytical writing activities to review writing conventions.
- Watch film adaptations of superhero works and divide the class into groups focusing on specific analytical tasks such as sound, color, acting, language.
- Introduce literature circle selections and have students take notes and rank their choices.
- In small literature circle groups, students will analyze the hero's journey and the structure of their work.
- Students will identify and analyze key pages and plot events in regards to their impact on the hero.
- Have students craft symbolically significant superhero's and short comic strips which provide some form of social commentary.
- Students will produce an informational video analysis or a vlog of their literature circle selection in which they analyze the works attempt at social commentary.

Materials

The materials used in this course integrate a variety of leveled instructional, enrichment, and intervention materials that support student learners at all levels in the school and home environments. Associated web content and media sources are infused into the unit as applicable and available.

Teachers must refer to the district-approved Core Book List while selecting whole-class or small-group leveled resources.

Instructional Materials

Fictional Text (Novel, Short Story, Poetry)

- *Watchmen* by Alan Moore

Independent/Small Group Reading:

- *The Vision Delux Edition* by Tom King
- *Moon Knight Complete* by Jeff Lemire
- *Batman: Arkham Asylum - A Serious House on Serious Earth* by Grant Morrison
- *Black Panther Volume 1: A Nation Under Our Feet* by Ta-Nehisi Coates
- *Jessica Jones, Vol. 1: Uncaged!* by Brian Michael Bendis

Nonfiction Text (Short, Long)

- Selections from *The New York Times*
- Selections from *The Atlantic Monthly*
- Selections from *The Economist*
- Selections from *Time Magazine*
- Selections from *PBS Newshour*
- Selections from *The New Yorker*

Visual Text (Art, Photography, Infographic, Film):

- *The Incredibles*
- *The Dark Knight*
- *Black Panther*
- *Watchmen*
- *Wonder Woman*
- Online *YouTube videos: Various interviews with authors/directors*
- Art Collections: http://www.metmuseum.org/
- Art Collections: http://www.metmuseum.org/
- https://www.gettyimages.com
- Other visual texts are acceptable

Speaking and Listening:

- Podcast: *Word Balloon*
- Podcast: *IFanboy*
- This American Life: https://www.thisamericanlife.org/podcast
- NPR: http://www.npr.org/
- Ted Radio Hour: http://www.npr.org/programs/ted-radio-hour/?showDate=2017-07-28
- Ted Talks
- Documentaries

Writing (Narrative, Informational, Argument):

Possible Mentor Texts:

- Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art by Scott McCloud
- Making Comics: Storytelling Secrets of Comics, Manga and Graphic Novels by Scott McCLoud
- Alan Moore's Writing for Comics by Alan Moore
- Zen Pencils: Carton Quotes from Inspirational Folks by Gavin Aung Than
- The Best American Comics 2016
- Player's Tribune
- The New York Times
- PBS News Hour
- The Atlantic
- The Washington Post

Research:

Cranford High School Media Center Databases:

- Ebsco Host
- Facts on File
- Follet Fiction Ebooks
- Gale Reference Ebooks
- New York Times
- Salem History Database
- Salem Literature
- Goodreads
- Readingrants
- Historychannel
- Easybib.com
- MLA Format online: https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/08/
- Purdue Owl:https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/
- Cranford Public Library Online Resources: http://cranford.com/library/

Additional Student Resources:

- Chromebooks/laptops
- Google Classroom or other LMS
- Writing Portfolios
- Writer's Notebook/Journal
- Google Documents/Drive
- Voice memo application
- Think Cerca
- Audible
- Padlet
- Socrative.com
- Poll everywhere
- Remind.com
- Skype
- Edublogs

- Soundcloud
- Netflix
- YouTube

Suggested Strategies for Accommodation and Modification

Content specific accommodations and modifications as well as Career Ready Practices are listed here for all students, including: Special Education, English Language Learners, At Risk of School Failure, Gifted and Talented, Students with 504.

Possible accommodations include:

- Access speech-to-text function on computer
- Use visual presentations of all materials to include organizers, charts
- Allow students to set individual goals for writing/reading
- Offer graphic organizaers, note-taking models, strategies for summarizing, and questioning techniques
- Offer oral assessments
- Supply study guide questions and access to class notes
- Work in partnerships
- Give responses in a form (verbal or written) that is easier for the student
- Take additional time to compete a task or project
- Scaffold by chunking material and texts
- Individualize reading choices based on ability and level
- Take frequent breaks
- Use an alarm to help with time management
- Small group and one on one assessment
- Mark text with a highlighter or other manipulative such as a post-it
- Receive help coordinating assignments
- Answering fewer questions or completing shorter tasks
- Modify the length and quantity of assignments to fit individual
- Differentiate roles in discussion groups
- Use digital technology, eBooks,, audio version of printed text
- Create alternate assignments or homework
- Provide distinct steps in a process; elminate unnecessary steps, as needed
- Use art, music, and film to convey alternate interpretation of literature and assessment
- Manage executive function by scaffolding process and amending deadlines

Adhere to all modifications and accommodations as prescribed in IEP and 504 plan