Unit 4 Writing: Elevating the Complexity of Literary Essays

Content Area: **English Language Arts**
Course(s):
Time Period: **Trimester 2**
Length: **5-6 Weeks**
Status: **Published**

Brief Summary of Unit

Students will write with a clear sense of structure, changing that structure around the content as needed. Students will identify and analyze problems that characters face while looking for the lessons that authors want them to know. Students will complete a compare and contrast essay using themes across texts.

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. In this course, students are provided with opportunities to develop skills that pertain to a variety of careers.

Revision date: July 2023

Standards

The identified standards reflect a developmental progression across grades/levels and make interdisciplinary connections across content areas including social sciences, technology, career readiness, cultural awareness and global citizenship. The standards that follow are relevant to this course in addition to the associated content-based standards listed below.

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.
LA.W.6.1.A	Introduce claim(s) and organize the reasons and evidence clearly.
LA.W.6.1.B	Support claim(s) with clear reasons and relevant evidence, using credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text.
LA.W.6.1.C	Use words, phrases, and clauses to clarify the relationships among claim(s) and reasons.
LA.W.6.1.D	Establish and maintain a formal/academic style, approach, and form.
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.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.L.6.1	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
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.6.5.B	Use the relationship between particular words (e.g., cause/effect, part/whole, item/category) to better understand each of the words.
LA.L.6.6	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 I use signal words to identify compare/contrast in my writing?
- Why do writers study mentor texts to construct literary essays?
- How can I use what I already know about literary essay structure and craft to develop an essay about a text's theme?
- How do I develop and support a strong claim about characters through reading closely, writing to think and analyzing the evidence that I find?
- How does conversation and collaboration help writers build ideas and grow their pieces?

Students Will Know/Students Will Be Skilled At

- how to craft claims.
- how to summarize, story tell and quote.
- categorizing observations while preparing to write a comparison/contrast essay.
- citing text evidence.
- comparing and contrasting themes across texts.
- considering the lessons within the texts.
- crafting claims.
- expressing thoughts clearly and persuasively.
- how to analyze how specific word choices, sentences, and paragraphs shape meaning and tone.
- how to cite specific textual evidence.
- how to compare and contrast themes.
- how to construct literary essays from mentor texts.
- how to create meaningful conversations among peers.
- how to determine theme.
- how to examine author's craft: flashback and flash forward, multiple plot lines, inner thinking, dialogue, revealing actions, multiple point of view, first person narrator, description, metaphor, tone, foreshadowing, and symbolism.
- how to interpret words and phrases.

- how to revise essays.
- identifying run ons and sentence fragments.
- identifying and analyzing problems that characters face.
- looking for patterns in similarities and differences.
- noticing similarities and differences among subjects.
- quoting texts to support ideas.
- structuring an essay while developing the theme.
- supporting claims about characters.
- using conventions of writing.
- using the writing process to write about a text's theme.

Evidence/Performance Tasks

Developmental progression across years in both reading and writing is evidenced by multiple benchmark assessment screeners, administered three 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:

- Answer essential questions
- Teacher observations/conferring notes
- Turn and talks
- Partnerships rehearsing their writing
- Peer Conferences/Partnership Discussion and Rehearsing
- Writer’s Notebook (quick writes/drafts/prewrites)
- Teacher checklists using mini-lessons for measurable skills
- Writing Conferences: Individual and small group
- Writing Partnership work and discussions
- Writing folders with student work
- Writing pieces to note the growth need of the writer
- Observations

- Listening in on partnership discussion of writing piece
- Drafts online (Google Docs)
- Writing Club work and discussions

Summative including Alternative Assessments:

- Students should have 1-2 final pieces.
- Published pieces
- Score grammar and spelling in final drafts only
- Student portfolios
- During publishing students read their piece to assess oral speaking and reading skills
- Teachers College Reading and Writing Project Learning Progressions
- Teachers College Reading and Writing Project Rubrics and Student Samples
- Rubrics: created for the standards-based report card as well as teacher-created.
- On-demand Writing Assessments
- Standards should be addressed

Benchmark Assessments:

- Benchmark reading and writing assessments, scored using rubrics, district-created and standards-aligned; based on NJSLA, reported twice per year
- Grade-level Standards-based Rubrics
- Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System, grades 3-8, Levels L-Z, Heinemann (part 3, Writing about Reading section)
- New Jersey Student Learning Assessment (NJSLA)

Learning Plan

Middle School Writing instruction follows a balanced literacy approach including a number of strategies and techniques in Writing Workshop. These include mini-lessons, shared writing, independent writing, small group strategy instruction, one-to-one conferencing, partnerships and/or writing clubs. Writing Workshop emphasizes immersion, independence, and choice. Individual conferences with each student will address specific needs of the writer. Each unit ends with a celebration of learning where writers share their work with others in the school community.

Lessons should follow the mini-lesson format:

- Teaching point(s) for each lesson
- Connection: Connects new learning to previous learning/lessons
- Teach/Modeling: Uses ‘think alouds’ when modeling what you expect students to do
- Guided Practice/Active Engagement: Guides students through practice of the teaching point
- Link to Independent Practice: Helps writers understand the purpose for the writing they are about to do and the skills/craft they will be practicing/applying independently as good writers
- Independent Writing/Student Conferences: Provides time for students to do independent writing while

teacher confers with individual students, works with small groups, or writing clubs.
- Closure/Sharing: Pull students back together and recognize the work they have done relating to the teaching point.

The architecture of a writing conference includes:

- Research
- Decide
- Teach and Coach with guided practice
- Link

Throughout the year, students write in all modes of rhetoric including narration/description, argument/persuasion, and exposition. A variety of writing forms, including digital writing, are emphasized. Grammar lessons are embedded in writing instruction, holding students accountable for skills taught and practiced; modeling is done through published and student-crafted mentor texts. Teachers focus equally on process and product with an emphasis on synthesizing across texts for nuanced understandings; teacher-created multi-modal text sets will be used as materials. High-and low-stakes writing and timed and untimed assignments will be used throughout the unit. Teachers may personalize instruction during this unit and address the distinct learning needs, interests, aspirations, or cultural backgrounds of individual students.

Sentence study teaches syntax, diction, grammar, and punctuation. Students will learn how to write like an author by mimicking specific sentence patterns and applying it to their own writing. Please see this grade level folder for details.

This unit of study focuses on writers crafting a claim on character that they prove through evidence from the text. Students will apply a combination of paragraphing and direct quotations. Students will incorporate sufficient background information to support their reasoning. Students will use various revision strategies to improve their voice and craft.

For this particular unit, teachers should...

- Prepare materials for discussion, writing, and synthesis
- Select mentor texts for modeling
- Share techniques and strategies for paraphrasing and citing textual evidence
- Share revision strategies
- Prepare for conferences with students
- Prepare materials for review of signposts
- Create formative and summative assessments

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.

Please reference the materials in this Middle School ELA, grade 6 folder under "writing."

- Dictionaries, thesaurus, scholastic guide to synonyms, antonyms
- Graphic organizers such as Venn diagrams, t-charts
- High interest short stories that match reading levels
- Other Mentor/Anchor Texts ideas: • Hard Luck (Diary of a Wimpy Kid Series) by Jeff Kinney • Forged by Fire by Sharon Draper • Knucklehead by Jon Scieszka • Who Am I Without Him by Sharon Flake • The Cay by Theodore Taylor • Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH by Robert C. O'Brien • Bridge to Terabithia by Katherine Paterson
- Prepare to create anchor charts- for example STEAL, Boxes and Bullets Essay Structure
- Scholastic editing activities and charts
- The View from Saturday by E. L. Konigsburg • The Devil's Arithmetic by Jane Yolen • Narrative Texts from 2014 Summer Institute on the Teaching of Reading at Paramus Public Schools • Readworks.org • Scholastic/Scope Magazine • *See appendix in Unit 5 in TC Reading binder on p.10-11 (Reading Curricular Calendar and How Long It Should Take a Child to Read a Book) and p. 23-24 (Series that Move up Levels within Series and Some Courses of Study for Teen Readers).
- Varied mentor/anchor texts/read-aloud texts as models
- www.Commonlit.com
- www.readingandwritingproject.com

Teacher Resources

- *Units of Study in Argument, Informatiion, and Narrative Writing, Grade 6*, Lucy Calkins, Teachers College Reading and Writing Project
- Associated Online Resources, Teachers College Reading and Writing Project, readingandwritingproject.org
- *Read Write Teach: Choice and Challenge in the Reading-Writing Workshop*, Linda Rief
- *Lessons that Change Writers*, Nancie Atwell
- *In the Middle: New Understandings about Writing, Reading, and Learning*, Nancie Atwell, associated videos
- *Energize Research Reading and Writing,* Chris Lehman, Grades 4-8
- *Comprehension and Collaboration: Inquiry Circles in Action*, Stephanie Harvey and Harvey Daniels

- *Finding the Heart of Nonfiction,* Georgia Heard
- *Patterns of Power: Inviting Young Writers into the Conventions of Language*, Jeff Anderson
- *The Power of Grammar,* Mary Ehrenworth and Vicki Vinton
- *A Writer's Notebook,* Ralph Fletcher
- *Writing a Life,* Katherine Bomer
- *Study Driven*, Katie Wood Ray
- *Thinking Through Genre*, Heather Lattimer
- *Feedback that Moves Writers Forward*, Patty McGee
- *The Big Book of Details*, Roz Linder
- *Assessing Writers*, Carl Anderson

Suggested Strategies for Accommodations and Modifications

Content specific accomodations 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.

The structure of writing workshop is designed to differentiate and address specific goals and learning for each writer:

- The unit includes presentation of material through multiple modalities such as visual, auditory, and kinesthetic to address the unique learning styles of all students.
- The teacher will assign, assess and modify if necessary to address the specific needs of the learner.
- Students have individualized choice of topics within each unit.
- Instruction provides focused small-group strategy lessons.
- Individual conferences with each student will address specific needs of the writer.

Possible accommodations during writing workshop include, but are not limited to:

- Access speech-to-text function on computer
- Use visual presentations of all materials to include organizers, charts, word walls.
- Allow students to set individual goals for writing.
- Offer graphic organizaers, note-taking models, strategies for summarizing, and questioning techniques.
- Offer oral assessments
- 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.
- Take frequent breaks
- Use an alarm to help with time management
- 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
- 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.
- Manage executive function by scaffolding process and amending deadlines

Possible modifications to content during writing workshop include, but are not limited to:

- Adhere to all modifications and accomodations as prescribed in IEP and 504 plan