

# Unit 1: Reading Realistic Fiction (Weeks 1 - 9)

Content Area: **English Language Arts**  
Course(s):  
Time Period: **Full Year**  
Length: **9 Weeks**  
Status: **Published**

## **SEL Competencies and Standards**

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SEL.PK-12.2.2	Recognize the skills needed to establish and achieve personal and educational goals
SEL.PK-12.3.1	Recognize and identify the thoughts, feelings, and perspectives of others
SEL.PK-12.3.2	Demonstrate and awareness of the differences among individuals, groups, and others' cultural backgrounds

## **Unit 1: Reading Realistic Fiction**

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### **Unit Rationale**

Realistic fiction offers a message about people, nature, or the world and helps our students explore their beliefs and values. These types of stories will help our students understand human problems and relationships. Throughout this unit, students will be exposed to a variety of short realistic fiction texts as well as one novel. Students will learn about inferences, text evidence, plot structure, theme, and word choice, as well as be introduced to speaking and listening expectations.

### **Pre-Assessments**

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Students will complete the Scholastic Reading Inventory as a pre-assessment. This will give teachers reading levels for grouping and story selections.

Teachers can also use the summer reading assignment as a pre-assessment to gauge student's ability to write about reading. The summer reading is a RACE response.

### **Essential Questions**

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- How can characters change as a result of their life experiences?
- How can conflict help you better understand the feelings and viewpoints of characters?
- Why do readers need to focus on a writer's word choice?

- Why do character traits and their interactions help the reader determine character motives?

## **Instructional Plan**

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Throughout this unit, students will be exposed to a variety of short realistic fiction texts as well as one novel. These texts will offer great opportunities for the skill sets stated in the unit rationale.

Possible Texts:

- Fast Pitch, Nic Stone
- Abby, Tried, and True by Donna Gephart
- Every Shiny Thing, Cordelia Jensen
- The Secret Sheriff of Sixth Grade, Jordan Sonnenblick
- Waiting For Normal, Leslie Connor
- A Mango Shaped Space, Wendy Mass
- any short stories especially those connected to Writing Workshop
- Windows & Mirrors Grade 6 Textbook

\*There are specific materials for each of these novels within the [6th grade teacher's drive](#)\* If you cannot access this link please email Sarah Whitman at [swhitman@collsk12.org](mailto:swhitman@collsk12.org) for full access.

## **Skill Set 1: Inferences & Connections**

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**This skill set can take 2-5 teaching days to complete.**

### **Student Learning Intentions or We are learning to ... (WALT)**

WALT relevant connections and text evidence are used to make inferences

WALT draw inferences from the text

WALT cite textual evidence to support analysis of inferences drawn from the text

WALT citing is a specific way of quoting textual evidence

### **Student Success Criteria ... "I can statements"**

I can...make personal connections to a text.

I can...make connections between two or more texts.

I can...better comprehend a text by making connections.

I can...find implicit messages in a text.

I can...link connections and implicit messages together to make inferences.

I can...make inferences to better comprehend a text.

I can...identify text evidence that supports my inferences.

I can...properly cite the evidence I find that supports my inferences.

### **Instructional Strategies and Activities**

Provide background knowledge

Direct Instruction

Gradual release

Video instruction

Whole class reading

Independent reading

Group work

Video Analysis

Questioning

Cooperative Learning

### **Formative Assessments**

Entrance/Exit slips

Reading checks/quizzes

Student conferences

Class discussions

Observation

Turn and talks

Active reading logs/journals

## Instructional Materials and Resources

Supplementary background text for alcohol abuse, Afghanistan, bullying, foster care, racism, LGBTQIA+ rights, etc

[Students will reflect on general comprehension](#)

Inference Activities

Booksaps/SRC

## Reflections and Suggested Modifications

Students were very responsive to making inferences based on physically acted out “clues” (SW)

Significant struggle to find relevant evidence and to pare it down to only what’s most necessary to support their points (SW)

Students were able to connect their own experiences to the text (EJ)

Students were able to cite text evidence to support a claim. Their RACER responses are definitely getting stronger. (DT)

ELA.RL.CR.6.1	Cite textual evidence and make relevant connections to support analysis of what a literary text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
ELA.SL.PE.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.
ELA.SL.PE.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.

## Skill Set 2: Theme & Summarization

**Each skill set can take 2-5 teaching days to complete.**

### Student Learning Intentions or We are learning to ... (WALT)

WALT theme or central idea is conveyed through particular details in a text

WALT determine a theme or central idea of a text

WALT provide a summary distinct from personal opinions or judgments

### Student Success Criteria ... “I can statements”

I can...generate a list of topics relevant to a text.

I can...list ideas that are representative of character actions.

I can...consider the life skills or personality traits characters demonstrated.

I can...recall events/situations and how characters reacted to them.

I can...reflect on significant choices characters made.

I can...identify the theme of a text.

I can...name the difference between theme and central idea.

I can...use graphic organizers to arrange key events in a text.

I can...summarize key events from a text chronologically in my own words.

### **Instructional Strategies and Activities**

Direct Instruction

Gradual release

Video instruction

Whole class reading

Independent reading

Annotations

Summarizing

Questioning

Cooperative Learning

Group Work

### **Formative Assessments**

Entrance/Exit slips

Reading checks/quizzes

Student conferences

Class discussions

Observation

### **Instructional Materials and Resources**

[Quote Activity](#)

[Theme Activity](#)

## [TAAMIO summary activity](#)

Pixar shorts

Children's books

### **Reflections and Suggested Modifications**

Used fill-in notes to teach theme, and spent a lot of time using short stories and children's books to practice theme identification (SW)

They can sometimes struggle with separating their personal views from overarching themes, so we spent some time discussing how you don't have to necessarily agree with a theme for it to be a theme (SW)

Students are truly loving learning about theme. Today we watched some short Pixar films (4) and after each video students had to come up with a theme, a lesson for each video! (EJ)

Students identified themes in short stories. Then, found text examples to support their idea.

ELA.RI.CI.6.2	Determine the central idea of an informational text and explain how it is supported by key details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.
ELA.RL.TS.6.4	Analyze how a particular piece (e.g., sentence, chapter, scene, stanza, or section) fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of the ideas, theme, setting, or plot.
ELA.SL.PE.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.
ELA.SL.PE.6.1.D	Review the key ideas expressed and demonstrate understanding of multiple perspectives through reflection and paraphrasing.
ELA.SL.PI.6.4	Present claims and findings, sequencing ideas logically and using pertinent descriptions, facts, and details to accentuate main ideas or themes; use appropriate speaking behaviors (e.g., eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation).

### **Skill Set 3: Plot & Characterization**

**Each skill set can take 2-5 teaching days to complete.**

#### **Student Learning Intentions or We are learning to ... (WALT)**

WALT the plot of a story or drama unfolds in a series of episodes

WALT characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution

WALT compare dynamic and static characters

#### **Student Success Criteria ... "I can statements"**

I can...describe how the plot of a story or drama unfolds in a sequence of events.

I can...describe an event in depth using specific details from the text, such as their thoughts, words, or actions

I can...describe a character in depth using specific details from the text, such as their thoughts, words, or actions.

I can...identify and describe a dynamic character.

I can... identify and describe a static character.

I can...use details from the text to support my descriptions.

I can...compare the differences between dynamic and static characters.

I can...describe how the characters in a story or drama change as a story moves towards its conclusion.

### **Instructional Strategies and Activities**

Direct Instruction

Gradual release

Video instruction

Whole class reading

Independent reading

Annotations

Questioning

Cooperative Learning

Group Work

### **Formative Assessments**

Entrance/Exit slips

Reading checks/quizzes

Student conferences

Class discussions

Observation

### **Instructional Materials and Resources**

Plot Diagram

[Characterization Chart with text evidence](#)

### **Reflections and Suggested Modifications**

In my writing classes, we talk a LOT about how stories need to have change in order to be interesting...I find that those writing lessons correspond nicely with this standard (SW)

I feel like I didn't do a spectacular job teaching this explicitly...would like to spend time learning about how my colleagues are teaching this (SW)

Mrs. Whitman really helped me with this standard. She helped me better understand how to teach my students how every awesome story has change. Students were able to write their own story with change in it (EJ)

After reading our class novels, students identify what characters are static or dynamic. They are able to define the differences and support their ideas with text examples. (DT)

ELA.RL.IT.6.3	Describe how a particular text's structure unfolds in a series of episodes and use textual evidence to describe how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution.
ELA.SL.PE.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.
ELA.SL.PE.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.

## **Skill Set 4: Word Choice & Vocabulary**

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**Each skill set can take 2-5 teaching days to complete.**

### **Student Learning Intentions or We are learning to ... (WALT)**

WALT determine the meanings of figurative language

WALT specific word choice in a text has an impact on meaning and tone

WALT analyze the impact of word choice

### **Student Success Criteria ... "I can statements"**

I can...name and define several types of figurative language.

I can...compare different types of figurative languages.

I can...use context clues to identify the meaning of unknown words.

I can...evaluate an author's purpose of specific word choice.

### **Instructional Strategies and Activities**

Direct Instruction

Gradual release

Vocabulary Instruction

## Formative Assessments

Vocab jams

Vocab Quizzes

Observations

Writing Samples

## Instructional Materials and Resources

Vocab.com

Interactive notebook

Figurative language chart

## Reflections and Suggested Modifications

We used song lyrics as a way to identify types of figurative language, and the students responded well to that (SW)

We also created our own figurative language table, which taught not only the figurative language types but also some digital skills--the students really enjoyed it (SW)

Students and I discussed the value of imagery and figurative language and how it enhances a text and they were able to write their own examples in their narratives

We spent a lot of time reviewing samples and identifying smiley-face tricks in various texts. Then, it is applied to enhance their writing. (DT)

ELA.L.KL.6.2.A	Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases.
ELA.L.KL.6.2.B	Gather vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.
ELA.L.VL.6.3.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.
ELA.L.VL.6.3.B	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings.

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## Skill Set 5: Writing About Reading

Each skill set can take 2-5 teaching days to complete.

### Student Learning Intentions or We are learning to/that ... (WALT)

WALT arguments and claims are supported by clear reasoning and relevant evidence

WALT argue a claim supported by relevant evidence

WALT organize arguments and claims in a structural order

### **Student Success Criteria ... “I can statements”**

I can...argue a claim.

I can...find relevant evidence to support a claim.

I can...organize my thoughts in RACE format.

I can...explain how my evidence supports my claim.

I can...properly cite the evidence I use to support my claim.

I can...paraphrase key details in my own words.

### **Instructional Strategies and Activities**

Direct Instruction

Gradual Release

Think-Pair-Share

Peer Conferencing

### **Formative Assessments**

RACE assignments

Multi-Text assignment

Student conferences

Class discussions

Observation

### **Instructional Materials and Resources**

Students will complete short writing assignments on character, plot, and theme.

Race Responses

[Hero essay](#)

### **Reflections and Suggested Modifications**

I feel like I teach this more explicitly in writing class than I do in ELA, but there's definitely crossover (SW)

My students (communications lab) had a hard time with the hero essays. In spite of having a graphic organizer and an example, they didn't structure their writing properly, and some students barely completed the

assignment (SW)

To practice writing stamina, I like to interject creative writing tasks in between larger units where students can be creative and just practice writing over an extended time frame (SW)

Every Friday, students spend time on their Friday Freewrite. Students listen to music and write on either a provided prompt or topic of their choice. This activity fosters creativity. (SEL) (DT)

After each unit, we spend time writing creative stories. In each piece they focus on incorporating dialogue, figurative language, and smiley-face tricks. (DT)

ELA.W.AW.6.1.A	Introduce claim(s) about a topic or issue and organize the reasons and evidence logically.
ELA.W.AW.6.1.B	Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant, accurate data and evidence, that demonstrate an understanding of the topic or text, using credible sources.
ELA.SL.ES.6.3	Deconstruct a speaker's argument and specific claims, distinguishing claims that are supported by reasons and evidence from claims that are not.
ELA.SL.PI.6.4	Present claims and findings, sequencing ideas logically and using pertinent descriptions, facts, and details to accentuate main ideas or themes; use appropriate speaking behaviors (e.g., eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation).

## **Modifications and/or Accommodations**

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### **Suggested Modifications (ELL, Sp. Ed, Gifted, At-risk of Failure)**

#### **English Language Learners**

Native language support: The teacher provides auditory or written content to students in their native language.

Adjusted Speech: The teacher changes speech patterns to increase student comprehension. This could include facing the students, paraphrasing, clearly indicating the most important ideas, and speaking more slowly.

Visuals: The teacher uses graphics, pictures, visuals, and manipulatives. This helps ELL students better understand and comprehend the subjects at hand.

Front-Loading Vocabulary: The teacher front loads vocabulary. This means providing students with a list of important vocabulary words they will need to know for a book, lesson, etc. prior to the lesson being taught. Including pictures to go with the vocabulary words is also very beneficial for the students.

#### **Special Education Students**

Chunking: The teacher presents information in a way that makes it easy for students to understand and remember. Chunking is based on the presumption that our working memory is easily overloaded by excessive detail. The best way to deliver information is to organize it into meaningful units. Because students with special needs get overloaded easily, chunking is an effective strategy to use with them.

Checking for Understanding: It is important to constantly check for understanding, especially for students who have accommodations. Teachers want to make sure students understand the concepts being covered in a way that makes sense to them.

Extra time: The teacher provides students with special needs extra time to complete work or answer questions. It is important to give students enough time to process their thoughts.

Oral Reading: The teacher will read work orally to students. Class work such as tests and literature circles may need to be read aloud to the student.

Timers: The teacher will use timers as an instructional tool. The use of timers is beneficial for students who have trouble completing tasks. Timers can be helpful so the student is aware of how much time they have to complete an assignment.

## Students with 504 Plans

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## Gifted & Talented Strategies

Extensions/Enrichments: Teachers will provide gifted and talented students with extension/enrichment projects. Students will be challenged to further their understanding, to apply acquired knowledge, and/or to produce something in reference to acquired knowledge.

Modify/Change Activities: Teachers will monitor and modify activities to accommodate those students who need to be challenged further. Additional reading, problem-solving, writing, or project work is necessary for those students who are ready to move on at a rate more accelerated than their peers. In this way, G & T students are provided the same opportunity for support as special needs students.

## Students at Risk of School Failure

Directions or Instructions: Make sure directions and/or instructions are given in limited numbers.

Give directions/instructions verbally and in simple written format. Ask students to repeat the instructions or directions to ensure understanding occurs. Check back with the student to ensure he/she hasn't forgotten.

Peer Support: Peers can help build confidence in other students by assisting in peer learning. Many teachers use the 'ask 3 before me' approach. This is fine, however, a student at risk may have to have a specific student or two to ask. Set this up for the student so he/she knows who to ask for clarification before going to you.

Alternate or Modified Assignments: Always ask yourself, "How can I modify this assignment to ensure the students at risk are able to complete it?" Sometimes you'll simplify the task, reduce the length of the assignment or allow for a different mode of delivery. For instance, many students may hand something in, the at-risk student may jot notes and give you the information verbally. Or, it just may be that you will need to assign an alternate assignment.

Increase One to One Time: When other students are working, always touch base with your students at risk and find out if they're on track or needing some additional support. A few minutes here and there will go a long way to intervene as the need presents itself.

Contracts: It helps to have a working contract between you and your students at risk. This helps prioritize the tasks that need to be done and ensure completion happens. Each day write down what needs to be completed, as the tasks are done, provide a checkmark or happy face. The goal of using contracts is to eventually have the student come to you for completion sign-offs.

Hands On: As much as possible, think in concrete terms and provide hands-on tasks. This means a child doing math may require a calculator or counters. The child may need to tape record comprehension activities instead of writing them. A child may have to listen to a story being read instead of reading it him/herself.

Tests/Assessments: Tests can be done orally if need be. Break tests down in smaller increments by having a portion of the test in the morning, another portion after lunch and the final part the next day.

Seating: Seat students near a helping peer or with quick access to the teacher. Those with hearing or sight issues need to be close to the instruction which often means near the front.

## **New Jersey Student Learning Standards: Content Area**

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ELA.L.KL.6.2.A	Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases.
ELA.L.KL.6.2.B	Gather vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.
ELA.L.VL.6.3.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.
ELA.L.VL.6.3.B	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings.
ELA.RL.CR.6.1	Cite textual evidence and make relevant connections to support analysis of what a literary text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

ELA.RL.CI.6.2	Determine the theme of a literary text (e.g., stories, plays or poetry) and explain how it is supported by key details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.
ELA.RL.IT.6.3	Describe how a particular text’s structure unfolds in a series of episodes and use textual evidence to describe how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution.
ELA.RL.TS.6.4	Analyze how a particular piece (e.g., sentence, chapter, scene, stanza, or section) fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of the ideas, theme, setting, or plot.
ELA.W.AW.6.1.A	Introduce claim(s) about a topic or issue and organize the reasons and evidence logically.
ELA.W.AW.6.1.B	Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant, accurate data and evidence, that demonstrate an understanding of the topic or text, using credible sources.
ELA.SL.PE.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.
ELA.SL.PE.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.
ELA.SL.PE.6.1.D	Review the key ideas expressed and demonstrate understanding of multiple perspectives through reflection and paraphrasing.
ELA.SL.ES.6.3	Deconstruct a speaker’s argument and specific claims, distinguishing claims that are supported by reasons and evidence from claims that are not.
ELA.SL.PI.6.4	Present claims and findings, sequencing ideas logically and using pertinent descriptions, facts, and details to accentuate main ideas or themes; use appropriate speaking behaviors (e.g., eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation).

## **Integration of Career Readiness, Life Literacies and Key Skills**

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TECH.9.4.2.CI.1	Demonstrate openness to new ideas and perspectives (e.g., 1.1.2.CR1a, 2.1.2.EH.1, 6.1.2.CivicsCM.2).
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## **Integration of Computer Science and Design Thinking**

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CS.6-8.8.1.8.AP.6	Refine a solution that meets users’ needs by incorporating feedback from team members and users.
TECH.8.1.8.A.2	Create a document (e.g., newsletter, reports, personalized learning plan, business letters or flyers) using one or more digital applications to be critiqued by professionals for usability.
TECH.8.1.8.A.3	Use and/or develop a simulation that provides an environment to solve a real world problem or theory.
TECH.8.1.8.A.5	Create a database query, sort and create a report and describe the process, and explain the report results.
TECH.8.1.8.F.CS1	Identify and define authentic problems and significant questions for investigation.

## **Interdisciplinary Connections: NJSLs for ELA, Social Studies, Science and/or Math**

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The reading skills taught throughout this unit will provide knowledge, practice, and support in all content areas where reading is required. Realistic fiction offers a message about people, nature, or the world and helps

our students explore their beliefs and values. These types of stories will help our students understand human problems and relationships.

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1bNUBwwW9BLgTLqjfVVAJiet6rbmQ3THg-sXDz2rEnXk/edit?usp=sharing>

Historians consider the relevance and validity of sources to understand the perspectives of those involved when evaluating historical arguments.

Analyze and interpret data to determine similarities and differences in findings.

## **21st Century Life and Career**

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CRP.K-12.CRP1.1	Career-ready individuals understand the obligations and responsibilities of being a member of a community, and they demonstrate this understanding every day through their interactions with others. They are conscientious of the impacts of their decisions on others and the environment around them. They think about the near-term and long-term consequences of their actions and seek to act in ways that contribute to the betterment of their teams, families, community and workplace. They are reliable and consistent in going beyond the minimum expectation and in participating in activities that serve the greater good.
CRP.K-12.CRP2.1	Career-ready individuals readily access and use the knowledge and skills acquired through experience and education to be more productive. They make connections between abstract concepts with real-world applications, and they make correct insights about when it is appropriate to apply the use of an academic skill in a workplace situation.
CRP.K-12.CRP4.1	Career-ready individuals communicate thoughts, ideas, and action plans with clarity, whether using written, verbal, and/or visual methods. They communicate in the workplace with clarity and purpose to make maximum use of their own and others' time. They are excellent writers; they master conventions, word choice, and organization, and use effective tone and presentation skills to articulate ideas. They are skilled at interacting with others; they are active listeners and speak clearly and with purpose. Career-ready individuals think about the audience for their communication and prepare accordingly to ensure the desired outcome.

## **Integration of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion; Climate Change; Informational and Media Literacy**

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See Crosswalks.

The novel and short story variety allows for discussions about same sex couples, LGBTQIA+ rights, and racism.

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1uf0fWDvpqWFOAb51rOq7mN5xq-xu-M5Yp2FbEVZ9Kt8/edit?usp=sharing>

