

# Unit 1: Essential Elements of Literature (Weeks 1-6)

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

## Unit 1: Essential Elements of Literature

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This unit comes first in this course because it serves as the foundation for the essential reading and writing skills students must acquire and master before they will be able to move onto more complex texts and in-depth writing and research assignments. The work students complete in this unit will ensure they are able to read a variety of texts, both literary and nonfiction, analyze them, and craft articulate oral and written responses to them.

## Essential Questions

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1. What do works of literature teach us about human nature and the world around us?
2. What is the difference between a topic, theme, central idea, and summary?
3. How do we determine the theme(s) in a work of literature, and how do we write about them?
4. How do authors' decisions regarding word choices, structure, and point of view impact the objective and thematic meanings of their works?

## Pre-Assessments

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Students will complete two pre-assessments: 1) They will be asked to write about/rate their current knowledge of the elements covered in this unit (theme, central idea, etc.) so that teachers can get a more subjective and personal idea of where students feel they stand on these elements before moving forward; 2) They will read a short story and complete a multiple choice and short answer assessment to supply teachers with objective data prior to deciding exactly how to move forward with this instructional unit.

## Instructional Plan

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## Pre-Assessment

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

WALT we cannot accurately analyze a text without using relevant textual evidence to support our analysis.

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

I can review all the terms students are expected to understand through this unit.

## **Instructional Strategies and Activities**

- Short written responses
- Google Form Surveys
- Individual reading and annotation of articles and short stories
- Note-taking during direct instruction
- Watching film clips and videos to identify terms/make connections to unit content
- Small group discussion
- Whole-class discussion
- Think-pair-share
- RACE responses
- One-on-one conferences
- KWL Charts
- Anticipation Guides
- Essay brainstorming, outlining, planning, peer-editing, and finalizing

## **Formative Assessments**

Class discussion

Warm ups/Exit Tickets

## **Instructional Materials and Resources**

Anticipation Guide

## **Reflections and Suggested Modifications**

## **Story Terms Slideshow**

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

WALT some textual evidence is easy to find to support our analysis because it's literal, i.e., direct characterization.

WALT other textual evidence is a bit harder to find to support our analysis, as it requires us to make

inferences, i.e., indirect characterization.

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

I can review all the terms students are expected to understand through this unit.

### **Instructional Strategies and Activities**

- Short written responses
- Google Form Surveys
- Individual reading and annotation of articles and short stories
- Note-taking during direct instruction
- Watching film clips and videos to identify terms/make connections to unit content

### **Formative Assessments**

- Exit quizzes
- Whole-class text chapter/excerpt quizzes
- CommonLit

### **Instructional Materials and Resources**

Slideshow

### **Reflections and Suggested Modifications**

### **Story Terms Video**

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

WALT analyses are subjective and can differ from reader to reader, as long as they have evidence to support their analysis.

WALT a theme is a message that a work of literature communicates about society, human nature, or the human experience.

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

I can identify the theme of a complex text

### **Instructional Strategies and Activities**

Students will watch “The Sorcerer's Apprentice” from Disney’s Fantasia to identify the story terms we previously reviewed. They will do this individually first, then we’ll review as a whole class.

### **Formative Assessments**

- Exit quizzes
- Whole-class text chapter/excerpt quizzes
- CommonLit

### **Instructional Materials and Resources**

- Watching film clips and videos to identify terms/make connections to unit content
- Small group discussion
- Whole-class discussion

### **Reflections and Suggested Modifications**

“The Sorcerer's Apprentice” from Disney’s Fantasia

### **Story Terms Video Review**

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

WALT every work of literature has at least one theme.

WALT themes are arguable statements that can be supported by textual evidence.

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

I can analyze how themes connect

I can choose evidence that relates to theme

### **Instructional Strategies and Activities**

Small Group: Students will break into small groups to watch a film clip for the purpose of identifying story terms. They'll watch individually, then share their work in small groups to help one another understand. Then, I'll meet with each group to assess their work.

(See Team Film Analysis Docs [1](#) and [2](#))

### **Formative Assessments**

Individual → Whole-class reviews of material: At multiple points throughout this unit, we will watch a film clip or read a text, then work together as a whole class to review material.

### **Instructional Materials and Resources**

Film Analysis Docs

### **Reflections and Suggested Modifications**

## **Story Terms Text Review - Whole Class**

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

WALT every work of literature has at least one theme.

WALT themes are arguable statements that can be supported by textual evidence.

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

I can identify the theme or themes of a text

### **Instructional Strategies and Activities**

Whole Class: We'll read a short story together, stopping periodically to discuss and identify story terms.

### **Formative Assessments**

Whole-class reviews of material: At multiple points throughout this unit, we will watch a film clip or read a text, then work together as a whole class to review material

Exit quizzes

Whole-class text chapter/excerpt quizzes  
CommonLit

## **Instructional Materials and Resources**

Commonlit

## **Reflections and Suggested Modifications**

### **Story Terms Text Review - Small Group:**

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

WALT themes are not usually stated for us explicitly; rather, we need to infer the themes of a text by analyzing the characters' actions, interactions, and overall plot.

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

I can make inferences based on textual evidence

## **Instructional Strategies and Activities**

Students will break into small groups to read a short story for the purpose of identifying story terms. They'll read individually, then share their work in small groups to help one another understand. Then, I'll meet with each group to assess their work.

(See Team Story Analysis Docs [1](#) and [2](#))

## **Formative Assessments**

Individual → small group reviews of material: At multiple points throughout this unit, students will be asked to watch a film clip or read a text on their own, then work in a small group to share understanding of material. I will meet with each group to assess

## **Instructional Materials and Resources**

## **Reflections and Suggested Modifications**

### **Story Terms Assessment**

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

WALT central ideas are often easier to determine than themes because they are generally based on explicit textual evidence rather than inferences.

WALT summaries are different from themes and central ideas in that they simply tell us what happened in a text, not what the text means; therefore, summaries are easier to write.

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

I can write a successful summary

#### **Instructional Strategies and Activities**

Students will read a short story on their own and take an assessment.

#### **Formative Assessments**

Short Story Assessment: Students will read a short story on their own to analyze it and identify story terms. This will help me see how each student is performing so that I can alter my instruction if necessary.

#### **Instructional Materials and Resources**

Commonlit

## **Reflections and Suggested Modifications**

### **Whole-Class Text**

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

WALT a central idea is the overarching message of a work of nonfiction.

WALT every work of nonfiction should have at least one clear central idea.

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

I can identify the central idea of nonfiction texts

## **Instructional Strategies and Activities**

Throughout this part of the unit, we will be reading a fictional text together as a class (*Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck). This involves a variety of pre-reading/ background activities to provide context for story, small group and whole-class discussion of themes and issues in story, reading aloud together as well as individually for HW, etc. All throughout, students will be identifying story terms previously taught in this unit and thinking more deeply about them. They will be expected to read critically to analyze the text.

[\(See Of Mice and Men Slideshow\)](#)

## **Formative Assessments**

Post-Test + Theme Essay: The end goal of this unit is that students are confident in their knowledge of all the story terms we've reviewed and that they can identify a theme in a work of literature and write an essay to argue and support that theme.

## **Instructional Materials and Resources**

Slideshow

## **Reflections and Suggested Modifications**

## **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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**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.

## 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.SS.9–10.1.C	Use a semicolon (and perhaps a conjunctive adverb) to link two or more closely related independent clauses.
ELA.L.SS.9–10.1.D	Use a colon to introduce a list or quotation.
ELA.L.VL.9–10.3	Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grades 9–10 reading and content, including technical meanings, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.
ELA.L.VI.9–10.4	Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings, including connotative meanings.
ELA.L.VI.9–10.4.A	Interpret figures of speech (e.g., euphemism, oxymoron) in context and analyze their role in the text.
ELA.RL.CR.9–10.1	Cite a range of thorough textual evidence and make relevant connections to strongly support analysis of multiple aspects of what a literary text says explicitly and inferentially, as well as including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.
ELA.RL.CI.9–10.2	Determine one or more themes of a literary text and analyze how it is developed and refined over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.
ELA.RL.IT.9–10.3	Analyze how an author unfolds and develops ideas throughout a text, including how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.
ELA.RL.TS.9–10.4	Analyze how an author’s choices concerning the structure of a text, order of the events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulation of time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create specific effects (e.g., mystery, tension, or surprise).
ELA.W.RW.9–10.7	Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.
ELA.SL.PE.9–10.1	Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with peers on grades 9–10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
ELA.SL.PE.9–10.1.A	Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas.
ELA.SL.PE.9–10.1.C	Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that relate the current discussion to broader themes or larger ideas; actively incorporate others into the discussion; and clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions.
ELA.SL.PE.9–10.1.D	Respond thoughtfully to various perspectives, summarize points of agreement and disagreement, and justify own views. Make new connections in light of the evidence and reasoning presented.

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

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TECH.9.4.12.CT.1	Identify problem-solving strategies used in the development of an innovative product or practice (e.g., 1.1.12acc.C1b, 2.2.12.PF.3).
TECH.9.4.12.CT.2	Explain the potential benefits of collaborating to enhance critical thinking and problem solving (e.g., 1.3E.12profCR3.a).
TECH.9.4.12.IML.8	Evaluate media sources for point of view, bias, and motivations (e.g., NJLSA.R6, 7.1.AL.IPRET.6).
TECH.9.4.12.IML.9	Analyze the decisions creators make to reveal explicit and implicit messages within information and media (e.g., 1.5.12acc.C2a, 7.1.IL.IPRET.4).

## **Integration of Computer Science and Design Thinking**

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CS.K-12.1.a	Include the unique perspectives of others and reflect on one's own perspectives when designing and developing computational products.
CS.K-12.2.a	Cultivate working relationships with individuals possessing diverse perspectives, skills, and personalities.
CS.K-12.2.b	Create team norms, expectations, and equitable workloads to increase efficiency and effectiveness.
CS.K-12.2.c	Solicit and incorporate feedback from, and provide constructive feedback to, team members and other stakeholders.

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

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See Crosswalks

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

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CAEP.9.2.12.C.3	Identify transferable career skills and design alternate career plans.
TECH.8.1.12.A.3	Collaborate in online courses, learning communities, social networks or virtual worlds to discuss a resolution to a problem or issue.
TECH.8.1.12.A.5	Create a report from a relational database consisting of at least two tables and describe the process, and explain the report results.
TECH.8.1.12.E.CS1	Plan strategies to guide inquiry.
TECH.8.1.12.E.CS2	Locate, organize, analyze, evaluate, synthesize, and ethically use information from a variety of sources and media.

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

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SOC.6.1.12.CivicsPD.1.a	Use multiple sources to analyze the factors that led to an increase in the political rights and participation in government.
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SOC.6.1.12.HistoryCC.3.a	Evaluate the role of religion, music, literature, and media in shaping contemporary American culture over different time periods.
CAEP.9.2.12.C.1	Review career goals and determine steps necessary for attainment.
CAEP.9.2.12.C.2	Modify Personalized Student Learning Plans to support declared career goals.

## **SEL Competencies**

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SEL.PK-12.2.2	Recognize the skills needed to establish and achieve personal and educational goals
SEL.PK-12.2.3	Identify and apply ways to persevere or overcome barriers through alternative methods to achieve one's goals
SEL.PK-12.3.3	Demonstrate an understanding of the need for mutual respect when viewpoints differ
SEL.PK-12.5.2	Utilize positive communication and social skills to interact effectively with others