

# 03\_Reading Historical Fiction with Empathy and Compassion

Content Area: **ELA**  
Course(s):  
Time Period: **Full Year**  
Length: **7 Weeks (35 days)**  
Status: **Published**

## **OBJECTIVES, ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS, ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS**

**Essential Question:** How can reading historical fiction with empathy and compassion transform us into global citizens by deepening our understanding of the past and enhancing our ability to connect with characters and their experiences?

### **Students will understand the following:**

- How historical fiction allows them to step into the shoes of characters from different time periods and cultures, fostering empathy and compassion towards diverse perspectives.
- The importance of historical context in interpreting and analyzing historical fiction, enables them to critically engage with the text and recognize its relevance to the present.
- How reading historical fiction with empathy and compassion can broaden their worldview, helping them become more informed and empathetic global citizens.
- The power of storytelling in conveying historical events and experiences, as well as the ethical responsibility of authors in representing diverse voices and perspectives.
- How reading historical fiction can stimulate critical thinking and encourage them to question assumptions, biases, and stereotypes embedded within the narrative.
- The transformative potential of reading historical fiction with empathy and compassion and how it can inspire them to create positive change in their own lives and communities.
- The major components of a literary analysis essay, and how they are all necessary for a cohesive essay.

## **General Overview, Course Description or Course Philosophy**

Students will embark on a transformative literary journey. Aligned with the New Jersey Student Language standards for English Language Arts, this unit aims to deepen students' understanding of the time period of World War II and the Holocaust. Through the lens of historical fiction, students will explore diverse time periods and cultures, creating empathy and compassion for characters whose experiences differ from their own. They will delve into the power of storytelling as a means to understand the past and its relevance to the present. By analyzing historical context and making connections to the present, students will meet the standards of critically examining texts and identifying themes and central ideas. Additionally, this unit will foster a global perspective, promoting students' growth as informed and empathetic global citizens. This unit aims to foster a holistic learning experience where students not only develop their reading skills but gain a

deeper understanding of history.

## **CONTENT AREA STANDARDS**

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RI.7.1. Cite several pieces of textual evidence and make relevant connections to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

RI.7.2. Determine two or more central ideas in a text and analyze their development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.

RI.7.3. Analyze the interactions between individuals, events, and ideas in a text (e.g., how ideas influence individuals or events, or how individuals influence ideas or events).

RI.7.4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone.

RI.7.5. Analyze the structure an author uses to organize a text, including how the major sections contribute to the whole and to the development of the ideas.

RI.7.6. Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how the author distinguishes his or her position from that of others.

W.7.2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

A. Introduce a topic clearly, previewing what is to follow; 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).

B. Develop the topic with relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.

C. Use appropriate transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.

D. Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.

E. Establish and maintain a formal academic style, approach, and form. F. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented.

W.7.4. 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.)

W.7.5. 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, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed.

W.7.6. Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and link to and cite sources as well as to interact and collaborate with others, including linking to and citing sources.

W.7.7. Conduct short research projects to answer a question, drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions for further research and investigation.

W.7.8. Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.

W.7.9. Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

A. Apply grade 7 Reading standards to literature (e.g., “Compare and contrast a fictional portrayal of a time, place, or character and a historical account of the same period as a means of understanding how authors of fiction use or alter history”).

B. Apply grade 7 Reading standards to literary nonfiction (e.g. “Trace and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is sound and the evidence is relevant and sufficient to support the claims”).

SL.7.2. Analyze the main ideas and supporting details presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how the ideas clarify a topic, text, or issue under study.

SL.7.3. Delineate a speaker’s argument and specific claims, evaluating the soundness of the reasoning and the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.

LA.RL.7.1	Cite several pieces of 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.7.2	Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.
LA.RL.7.3	Analyze how particular elements of a story or drama interact (e.g., how setting shapes the characters or plot).
LA.RL.7.4	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of rhymes and other repetitions of sounds (e.g., alliteration) on a specific verse or stanza of a poem or section of a story or drama.
LA.RL.7.5	Analyze how a drama’s or poem’s form or structure (e.g., soliloquy, sonnet) contributes to its meaning.
LA.RL.7.6	Analyze how an author develops and contrasts the points of view of different characters or narrators in a text.
LA.RL.7.7	Compare and contrast a written story, drama, or poem to its audio, filmed, staged, or multimedia version, analyzing the effects of techniques unique to each medium (e.g., lighting, sound, color, or camera focus and angles in a film).
LA.RL.7.9	Compare, contrast and reflect on (e.g., practical knowledge, historical/cultural context, and background knowledge) a fictional portrayal of a time, place, or character and a historical account of the same period as a means of understanding how authors of fiction use or alter history.
LA.RI.7.9	Analyze and reflect on (e.g., practical knowledge, historical/cultural context, and background knowledge) how two or more authors writing about the same topic shape their presentations of key information by emphasizing different evidence or advancing different interpretations of facts.
LA.W.7.4	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.7.9.A	Apply grade 7 Reading standards to literature (e.g., “Compare and contrast a fictional portrayal of a time, place, or character and a historical account of the same period as a means of understanding how authors of fiction use or alter history”).
LA.SL.7.1.A	Come to discussions prepared, having read or researched material under study; 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.7.1.D	Acknowledge new information expressed by others and, when warranted, modify their own views.
LA.SL.7.4	Present claims and findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with pertinent descriptions, facts, details, and examples; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.
LA.L.7.1	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
LA.L.7.2	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.
SOC.6.1.12.CivicsHR.11.a	Assess the responses of the United States and other nations to the violation of human rights that occurred during the Holocaust and other genocides.  To better understand the historical perspective, one must consider historical context.

## **RELATED STANDARDS (Technology, 21st Century Life & Careers, ELA Companion Standards are Required)**

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TECH.K-12.P.3	Consider the environmental, social and economic impacts of decisions.
TECH.K-12.P.4	Demonstrate creativity and innovation.
TECH.K-12.P.5	Utilize critical thinking to make sense of problems and persevere in solving them.
TECH.K-12.P.8	Use technology to enhance productivity increase collaboration and communicate effectively.

## **STUDENT LEARNING TARGETS**

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Refer to the 'Declarative Knowledge' and 'Procedural Knowledge' sections.

### **Declarative Knowledge**

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Students will understand that:

- Historical context, including setting, events, and cultural aspects portrayed in historical fiction texts, influences the overall meaning and interpretation of the story.
- Theme and central ideas in historical fiction texts are developed and can provide insight into human experiences from different periods.
- Authors of historical fiction texts may have biases, perspectives, and specific purposes, which can shape the narrative and influence readers' interpretations.
- Historical fiction offers valuable connections between past events and experiences and their relevance to contemporary society, allowing for a deeper understanding of history's impact on the present.
- Empathy and compassion can be developed through analyzing characters' emotions, motivations, and actions. Promoting a greater appreciation for diverse perspectives.
- Critical thinking, in questioning assumptions, biases, and stereotypes presented in historical fiction texts, enables them to develop a more nuanced understanding of the past and its representation in literature.

### **Procedural Knowledge**

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Students will be able to:

- Analyze the historical context of a given historical fiction text by examining the time period, setting, and cultural elements.
- Identify and explain the development of themes and central ideas within historical fiction texts, supporting their analysis with evidence from the text.

- Evaluate the author's perspective and purpose in writing historical fiction, considering factors such as bias, motivation, and intended audience.
- Make connections between the events, characters, and themes in historical fiction texts and real-world historical events or situations.
- Employ critical thinking skills to question and evaluate stereotypes, assumptions, and biases within historical fiction texts, recognizing their influence on the portrayal of characters and events.
- Analyze and interpret characters' emotions, motivations, and actions in historical fiction texts, demonstrating an understanding of empathy and compassion.
- Compare and contrast different historical fiction texts, noting similarities and differences in their portrayal of historical events, perspectives, and themes.
- Summarize the main ideas and key details of historical fiction texts, demonstrating comprehension and synthesis of the material.
- Analyze the impact of historical events on characters' lives and choices within historical fiction texts, considering the broader social, cultural, and political contexts.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the author's storytelling techniques in historical fiction, including the use of dialogue, imagery, and figurative language.
- Express their own interpretations and reflections on historical fiction texts, supporting their ideas with evidence from the text and personal experiences.
- Apply the lessons learned from reading historical fiction with empathy and compassion to their own lives and interactions, fostering a greater sense of empathy, understanding, and global citizenship.

## **EVIDENCE OF LEARNING**

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Refer to the 'Formative Assessments' and 'Summative Assessments' sections.

## **Alternate Assessments**

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- Teacher/Student Conferences
- Oral Presentations
- Multimedia Presentations
- Portfolio Assessments

## **Summative Assessments**

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Summative assessments can be but are not limited to constructed responses, projects, essays, quizzes, presentations, and literary essay.

## **Formative Assessments**

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Formative assessments will be, but are not limited to, close reading, shared reading, independent reading, discussions, reflection writing, exit tickets, and quizzes.

## **Benchmark Assessments**

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- iXL
- Edulastic

## **RESOURCES (Instructional, Supplemental, Intervention Materials)**

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Resources utilized but not limited to:

**Class Text:** *White Bird* by R.J. Palacio-Core text

### **Literary Circle Options:**

*When My Name Was Keoko* By Linda Sue Park

*Elephant in the Garden* by Michael Marpugo

*The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak

*Refugee* by Alan Gratz

*Breaking Stalin's Nose* by Eugene Velchin

*Friedrich* by Hans Peter Richter

*Code Talker* by Joseph Bruchac

*No Better Friend* by Robert Weintraub

*The War That Saved My Life* by Kimberly Brubaker Bradley

Supplemental:

[IXL](#)

[Commonlit](#)

## **INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS**

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### Social Studies

- Students will research and explore diverse time periods and cultures that differ from their own. They will use this background information to better understand the class novel and book club books.
- Ethics
- Holocaust Studies
- Social justice
- Philosophy
- Social relationships among people
- Autobiographical studies

### Technology/Multimedia

- Audio/visual media analysis
- Google
- Media Literacy
- Educational tech applications

## **ACCOMMODATIONS & MODIFICATIONS FOR SUBGROUPS**

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See link to Accommodations & Modifications document in course folder.