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ELA GRADE LEVEL OVERVIEW

GRADE 6

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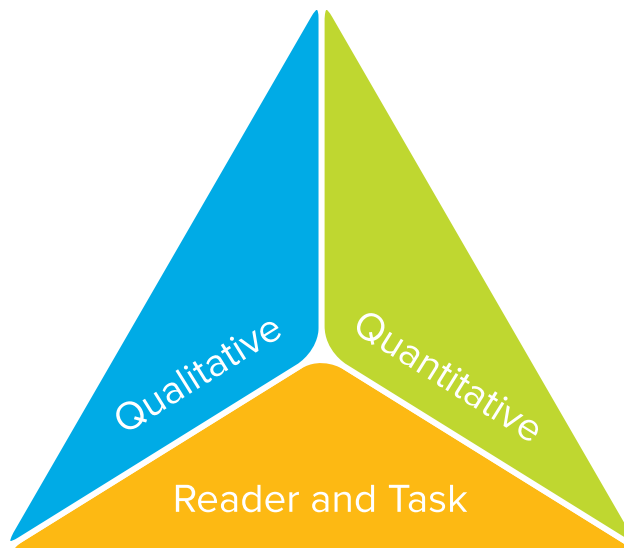


INTRODUCTION | GRADE 6

The Grade 6 Core ELA Units take students through literary and nonfiction texts that explore individuals facing crucial decisions, learning from their responses, becoming a better version of themselves. Unit 1, Testing Our Limits, examines what we do when life gets hard. Unit 2, You and Me, focuses on relationships and asks the Essential Question: How do relationships shape us? Unit 3, In the Dark, asks students to consider how they can figure out what to do when there are no instructions, while Unit 4, Personal Best, asks students to consider the unit’s driving question—Which qualities of character matter most?—by providing a range of texts that examine individuals wrestling with realistic and familiar struggles. Next, Unit 5, Making Your Mark, asks students to think about their own story. Finally, students finish up the year by thinking about the future as they address the question “Who are you meant to be?” in Unit 6, True to Yourself.

ELA Grade Level Overview Grade 6

Text Complexity



TEXT COMPLEXITY

UNIT 1: TESTING OUR LIMITS

Unit Title: Testing Our Limits

Essential Question: What do we do when life gets hard?

Genre Focus: Fiction

Overview

What do we do when life gets hard? How do we respond in a difficult situation? What do we do when our limits are tested? How do we face a challenge? What actions can we take to solve a problem? How can we overcome feelings of sadness, stress, or fear?

These are the questions your students will explore in this Grade 6 unit, which focuses on the genre of fiction.

Life is full of challenges, and some are harder than others. What we choose to do or say in the face of these challenges often varies on the challenge itself. Sometimes we choose to respond to challenges by attempting something that we have never done before, something that might even scare us a little. Climbing a mountain or running a marathon are challenges that people can choose to face. Often, however, life presents us with difficulties when people least expect it, such as an emergency or a crisis.

Texts within the unit's genre and across other genres present different perspectives on responding to life's unexpected difficulties. Deza Malone in Christopher Paul Curtis's *The Mighty Miss Malone* must deal with the events of the Great Depression when it tears her family apart. In Avi's short story "Scout's Honor" three Boy Scouts from Brooklyn learn a humbling lesson when their limits are tested on a camping trip. After reading about how these and other characters respond when their lives are upended, your students will try their own hands at writing a short story, applying what they have learned about dealing with life's challenges to their own narrative writing projects. Throughout this unit, students will explore the different reasons and ways in which people make decisions and take action when life turns out to be tougher than expected.

Text Complexity

Grade 6 Unit 1 continues sixth grade students' development as critical thinkers. The genre focus of this unit is fiction; however, students will also read a poem, a play, and an excerpt from a memoir. With a Lexile range of 670-1070, the majority of the texts in this unit fall between 670L and 750L, a comfortable level of difficulty for most sixth graders. Additionally, the vocabulary, sentence structure, text features, content and relationships among ideas make these texts accessible to sixth graders, enabling them to grow as readers by interacting with appropriately challenging texts.

The first text in the unit is “Eleven,” which is used in the SyncStart unit. Though this text has the highest Lexile, it also has the largest number of lessons supporting it. The length and difficulty of this short story are offset by a collection of skill lessons that teach students the necessary background skills for success in their English Language Arts class. Skills like Annotation, Context Clues, Reading Comprehension, and Collaborative Conversations do not just build a foundation for the school year, they allow students to encounter this text repeatedly from different perspectives, making comprehension of this difficult text more manageable.

Throughout the unit, the students read and analyze a collection of fiction pieces in a common Lexile band. In addition to their shared genre, these texts also share a thematic link: a focus on testing our limits. These texts present a variety of fictional worlds and formats. The novel excerpt from *The Mighty Miss Malone* illustrates how far one girl will push herself to succeed in school, while the beloved *A Wrinkle in Time* shows readers just how far people will travel to save their loved ones. *Hatchet* and “Scout’s Honor” have a familiar theme: surviving in nature. The shared thematic and genre link provides students with consistent access and reference points for the texts. Combined with the similar level of text difficulty, students can focus on applying the skills to these texts without drastic fluctuations in reader difficulty.

Two selections in this unit showcase more text difficulty: *Red Scarf Girl* and “Jabberwocky.” *Red Scarf Girl* represents a tonal departure from the previous two texts, “Eleven” and *The Mighty Miss Malone*, by placing readers in the shoes of a student as she faces an interrogation. The topical connection of testing our limits helps to make the historical context required to understand the text less essential. Ji-li Jiang’s language and references to politics during the interrogation may elude some readers, but the thoughts and internal dialogue of the narrator can help them overcome possible difficulties with specific language or a lack of prior knowledge about Communist China. The use of textual evidence to analyze author’s purpose and message highlights the importance of reading complex texts closely and thoughtfully in order to construct meaning. “Jabberwocky” is challenging both because of its unusual form and invented language, but that complexity is balanced by its puzzle-like appearance, a StudySyncTV episode, and two other texts to read in a comparative grouping.

Two sets of texts in this unit are grouped together for Comparing Within and Across Genres. The Skills lessons, Close Read questions and writing activities for *Red Scarf Girl* and *Hatchet* ask students to compare and contrast how the setting of a piece of fiction impacts the story. This first comparative task is well suited for two texts on the lower range of text complexity in the unit, and their lower Lexile is made more difficult by the comparison they are asked to make. In a second set of texts, “Jabberwocky,” *Gathering Blue*, and *A Wrinkle in Time* students practice comparative analysis across genres. This second group gives students the opportunity to apply the comparative thinking and writing skills they learned earlier in the unit to more complex texts from different genres.

English Language Learner Resources

Lessons in the English Language Learner Resources section offer explicit instruction. These lessons share a thematic and genre focus with all other lessons in the Core ELA unit.

The twenty ELL Resources are developed around two texts, “Lost Island” and “Connected,” and an Extended Oral Project. Each text is written at four distinct levels. For ELLs, these texts serve as structural and thematic models of authentic texts in the Integrated Reading and Writing section of the unit. Thus, teachers may use the ELL texts in

place of or as extensions for *Hatchet* and *A Wrinkle in Time*.

ELL lessons modify the routines used with texts in the Integrated Reading and Writing section. Explicit vocabulary instruction is emphasized, and reading and writing Skills lessons focus strongly on language acquisition and reading comprehension.

After reading texts about challenges and trying situations, students will complete an Extended Oral Project that can be used in place of or as an extension to the Extended Writing Project. In this unit, students will plan and present a realistic scene in the form of a group presentation.

Eleven

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| AUTHOR | Name | Sandra Cisneros |
| | Gender | Female |
| QUALITATIVE FEATURES | Publication Date | 1991 |
| | Genre | Fiction |
| | Access Complex Text Features | <p>Organization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students may not be familiar with first-person stream of consciousness technique. The use of so many commas in sections connect all of Rachel's thoughts. If sentences were broken up with periods, then they would read more as separate thoughts. <p>Connection of Ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some students may have difficulty linking Cisneros's use of imagery to the plot and theme. Point out that when Rachel compares getting older to an onion she is also explaining the reasons behind her behavior in class. <p>Purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The author's use of symbolism may be difficult for some students to grasp. Point out that the red sweater, because it is so trivial, supports Rachel's idea that sometimes, at eleven, you can still act as if you're four. |
| | | |
| QUANTITATIVE FEATURES | Lexile® | 1070 |
| | Word Count | 1,195 |
| READER AND TASKS | Skill Lessons | Annotation, Context Clues, Reading Comprehension, Text Dependent Responses, Textual Evidence, Figurative Language, Short Constructed Responses, Peer Review |
| | Close Read Prompt | Literary Analysis: How does the author's use of figurative language help readers understand the feelings that the narrator is expressing? Support your writing with evidence from the text. |
| BEYOND THE BOOK | Beyond the Book Activity | <p>Game: How would you respond?</p> <p>Put students in groups of 6. Give each group a stack of 12 index cards. Instruct students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Write a real-life scenario on one index card then write an age between three and their current age on a second card. Mix the scenario cards in one stack and mix the age cards in a second stack. Draw a real-life scenario card and an age card from each stack then act out how you think a child would respond to that situation at that age. <p>Select the "best performance" and have the students who have been selected by each group perform their reaction for the class.</p> <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> When do people become more logical and less emotional? What behavior is common for younger children? What does this reveal? |
| | | |
| UNIT CONNECTION | Connect to Essential Question | On the day she turns eleven, in Sandra Cisneros's short story "Eleven," Rachel is confronted with an unexpected challenge. Her teacher insists that Rachel is the owner of an old, ugly sweater that has been hanging in the student cloak room for months. But the sweater doesn't belong to Rachel, and to her surprise, she is only able to reply with the most feeble of responses. Finally, she bursts into tears. Rachel's reaction upsets her until she makes the discovery that even though you've just turned eleven, sometimes you can still act as if you were four or five. |
| | Connect to Extended Writing Project | Students can use "Eleven" as a mentor text for their Extended Writing Project. They may adopt some of Sandra Cisneros's descriptive language as they craft their own suspenseful narrative. |

The Mighty Miss Malone

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| AUTHOR | Name | Christopher Paul Curtis |
| | Gender | Male |
| QUALITATIVE FEATURES | Publication Date | 2012 |
| | Genre | Fiction |
| | Access Complex Text Features | <p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Term “Hooverville” may be not known. Hoovervilles were towns of crudely built houses built by unemployed people in the Depression. They were named after Herbert Hoover, the president in the early years of the Depression, on whom blame was placed. <p>Sentence Structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The selection contains examples of dialect and unusual sentence structure. Point out that phrases such as “then blurted out, ‘I’MNOTAFRAIDOGIRLS!’” serve as clues to the reader how quickly and loudly the character is speaking. <p>Organization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students may be confused by the jump in the narrative that takes place between paragraphs three and four. Explain that Miss Stew helps run the camp where Deza’s family is staying, and Miss Needham was one of Deza’s teachers in Gary. |
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| QUANTITATIVE FEATURES | Lexile® | 750 |
| | Word Count | 1,382 |
| READER AND TASKS | Skill Lessons | Making Connections |
| | Close Read Prompt | <p>Narrative: Describe how Deza’s responses to the C+ she received on her essay show how her character has changed. Then imagine how she will approach the next assignment she receives from Mr. Smith. Use the information you learned about both characters to write a short scene that describes this event.</p> |
| BEYOND THE BOOK | Beyond the Book Activity | <p>Research Project: School Then and Now</p> <p>To help students learn more about life in Depression-era Flint, organize students in groups. Ask each group to research one of the following topics related to the Great Depression:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hoovervilles Unemployment Schools Migrant workers <p>Have groups design visual aids and present their findings informally to the class.</p> <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How did this research help you better understand Deza’s daily life? What was life like in Hoovervilles and how might that have impacted Deza’s ability to do well in school? |
| | | |
| UNIT CONNECTION | Connect to Essential Question | In Christopher Paul Curtis’s <i>The Mighty Miss Malone</i> , twelve-year-old Deza Malone is a bright student with a promising future. But when the Great Depression hits Gary, Indiana, her family is confronted with many new challenges. Deza’s father leaves town to find work, and when he doesn’t return, Deza, her mother, and her brother go looking for him. They journey across the state by boxcar until they wind up in a “Hooverville” outside of Flint, Michigan. |
| | Connect to Extended Writing Project | Students can use <i>The Mighty Miss Malone</i> as a mentor text for their Extended Writing Project. They may note how Curtis uses an historical event—in this case the Great Depression—to create unexpected challenges for his characters. |

Red Scarf Girl

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| AUTHOR | Name | Ji-Li Jiang |
| | Gender | Female |
| QUALITATIVE FEATURES | Publication Date | 1997 |
| | Genre | Informational |
| | Access Complex Text Features | <p>Organization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Red Scarf Girl includes dialogue as well as first-person narration. Students need to draw details from both to understand the relationships between individuals, events, and ideas. <p>Specific Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many words, such as comrades, or study session, had special connotations during the Chinese Cultural Revolution. Students will need to consider these connotations while reading. The memoir does not always provide exact details about the study session. Students will need to consider the shades of meaning of various words to understand what is happening and how Ji-Li Jiang feels. <p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The focus on Chinese culture during a specific period in history may present special challenges for students. Many students may lack prior knowledge of the Chinese Communist Party and events surrounding the Cultural Revolution. |
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| QUANTITATIVE FEATURES | Lexile® | 40 |
| | Word Count | 871 |
| READER AND TASKS | Skill Lessons | Personal Response |
| | Independent Read Prompt | <p>Personal Response: Jiang is facing a challenging decision—between defending her father and protecting herself. Think about a time you had to make a difficult decision. Explain the decision you had to make, why you had to make it, and who, if anyone, helped you. Does your experience help you empathize with Jiang? Use evidence from the text to support your response.</p> |
| BEYOND THE BOOK | Beyond the Book Activity | <p>Mock Trial: Defending a Loved One</p> <p>Break into groups of 6-8 students. Ask groups to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Select a person they care about to put on trial for a crime they did not commit. Identify the people involved in the case—plaintiff, defendant, witnesses, judge, jury, and lawyers. Assign each group member a role. Send the plaintiff and defendant out of the room to record “the facts” of the case. Then they should give the facts to the witnesses and lawyers to review. While the plaintiff and defendant record the facts, the rest of the group should research the law relating to this crime. What is the punishment for this crime? What types of evidence are typically introduced in court for this crime? Have each group perform a brief mock trial for the class. <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Were any of the facts of the case unclear? Did the outcome of the trial surprise you? Was justice served? |
| | | |
| UNIT CONNECTION | Connect to Essential Question | In her memoir, <i>Red Scarf Girl</i> , Ji-Li Jiang recounts how hard it is to grow up dedicated to the Communist Party. |
| | Connect to Extended Writing Project | Students can draw inspiration from <i>Red Scarf Girl</i> as they consider a narrative for their Extended Writing Project. The memoir is set in the recent past, and features challenges connected to a specific period in time. |

Hatchet

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| AUTHOR | Name | Gary Paulsen |
| | Gender | Male |
| QUALITATIVE FEATURES | Publication Date | 1987 |
| | Genre | Fiction |
| | Access Complex Text Features | <p>Organization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Longer paragraphs in the selection are frequently followed by one-sentence or one-word paragraphs, which function to slow the pace of the text and allow readers to follow Brian's muddled post-crash thinking. These one-word paragraphs also serve to emphasize the seriousness of Brian's situation, as when <i>Nothing</i> is repeated in paragraphs 9 and 12 and is the only word in the paragraph. <p>Genre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The limited-third person narrator focuses on Brian and his situation and relays Brian's thoughts, words, and actions. This narrative choice allows readers to sympathize with Brian as they are also left to wonder whether a rescue mission is in progress. <p>Specific Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The selection contains examples of domain-specific vocabulary. Aviation terms, such as <i>flight plan</i>, <i>amphibious planes</i>, and <i>bushplanes</i>, may need to be defined. |
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| QUANTITATIVE FEATURES | Lexile® | 730 |
| | Word Count | 943 |
| READER AND TASKS | Skill Lessons | Setting, Compare and Contrast |
| | Close Read Prompt | Compare and Contrast: <i>Red Scarf Girl</i> and <i>Hatchet</i> feature young people trapped in challenging situations. In both texts, the setting provides the context for the main conflict or problem. Compare and contrast the role that the setting plays in influencing the characters and events of the two texts. |
| BEYOND THE BOOK | Beyond the Book Activity | <p>Debate: Selecting Your Survival Tool</p> <p>In <i>Hatchet</i>, Brian survives, in large part, because of his hatchet. Ask students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Imagine they have been stranded in the Alaskan wilderness in April. Research conditions in Alaska during this time of year. Students might consider questions such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What types of trees and plants might you encounter? What is the typical temperature? What food sources are available? What predators or dangerous animals are common? Select one survival tool they would take if they were going to be stranded for an indefinite amount of time. Provide three clear reasons for this choice. Draw a picture of their tool and write a brief explanation of why they selected it. <p>Finally, invite students to debate why their survival tool is the best choice.</p> |
| UNIT CONNECTION | Connect to Essential Question | In Gary Paulsen's <i>Hatchet</i> 13-year-old Brian Robeson discovers just how hard life can be when he is stranded in the Canadian wilderness after his pilot has a heart attack and their plane crashes into a lake. |
| | Connect to Extended Writing Project | Students can use Gary Paulsen's <i>Hatchet</i> as a mentor text for their Extended Writing Project. Paulsen's narrative is a classic tale of a fictional character meeting an unexpected, life-or-death challenge. |

The Magic Marker Mystery

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|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| AUTHOR | Name | René Saldaña, Jr. |
| | Gender | Male |
| QUALITATIVE FEATURES | Publication Date | 2013 |
| | Genre | Drama |
| | Access Complex Text Features | <p>Purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The author's intentions for writing the play may be ambiguous to some students. Point out how the play might have had a different ending if both Joe and Bucho had paid attention in class. <p>Genre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some students may have limited experience reading plays. Point out that in this play, "Lights Out" indicates the end of an act. It refers to the lights going out on stage before the next act begins. <p>Specific Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The selection contains idioms that may be unfamiliar. Explain that "a leopard doesn't change its spots" is an idiom that means a person doesn't change his or her behavior. |
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| QUANTITATIVE FEATURES | Lexile® | N/A |
| | Word Count | 2,692 |
| READER AND TASKS | Skill Lessons | Dramatic Elements and Structure, Making and Confirming Predictions |
| | Close Read Prompt | Literary Analysis: Think about how the playwright uses specific scenes to develop the plot. How would Act Three of "The Magic Marker Mystery" be different if it were told from Joe's perspective? In your response, indicate how this would affect the structure of the play as a whole. Support your writing with specific evidence from the text. |
| BEYOND THE BOOK | Beyond the Book Activity | <p>Writing: It Takes Two to Solve a Mystery</p> <p>Pair students for this collaborative writing exercise. The pairs will need to decide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where does your mystery take place? (e.g. at home, school, a sporting event, etc.) Who do you want to be in this mystery? (e.g. a friend, bully, a soccer player, etc.) <p>Once they decide on their mystery's context, students will take turns passing one paper between them. Each time they get the paper, they can write 1-3 lines of dialogue for their character. It's important that they not talk during this activity, but instead allow the mysterious scene to unfold naturally as they add dialogue.</p> <p>To reflect, ask students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How did you initiate the mysterious situation in your scene? How did your dialogue build tension and create mystery? |
| UNIT CONNECTION | Connect to Essential Question | As a budding private investigator, Mickey Rangel is asked to solve a difficult case at the middle school he attends, and find out who is marking up the school grounds with graffiti in René Saldaña Jr.'s "The Magic Marker Mystery." |
| | Connect to Extended Writing Project | Students may find inspiration in René Saldaña Jr.'s mystery play, both in its format and in the way the twists and turns of a mystery can lead characters to face unexpected challenges. |

Scout's Honor

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|----------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| AUTHOR | Name | Avi |
| | Gender | Male |
| QUALITATIVE FEATURES | Publication Date | 1996 |
| | Genre | Fiction |
| | Access Complex Text Features | <p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some students may be unfamiliar with the location of Brooklyn and the Palisades in New Jersey. Point out that Brooklyn is a borough of New York City. The Palisades Interstate Park contains 2,500 acres and is located about an hour from Brooklyn on a subway train. <p>Specific Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The selection contains some words that are specific to the time period of the late 1940s. Words and terms such as <i>Buster Brown shoes</i>, <i>F-36 fighter plane</i>, and Hell-cat dive-bomber may need to be explained or defined. <p>Sentence Structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Following the dialogue in the story may be difficult for some readers. Point out that the speaker is not always identified, and students should note that the dialogue is separated into paragraphs for each new speaker. |
| | Lexile® | 660 |
| Word Count | 764 | |
| READER AND TASKS | Skill Lessons | Story Structure, Plot |
| | Close Read Prompt | Literary Analysis: There are many challenges in “Scout’s Honor” that the boys face. How do the characters’ responses to these challenges help develop the plot and help readers interpret the events in the plot—such as the inciting incident, conflict, turning point and resolution—as they take place? Support your writing with evidence from the text. |
| BEYOND THE BOOK | Beyond the Book Activity | <p>Photography: What’s in Your Bag?</p> <p>In “Scout’s Honor,” each boy packs different items in preparation for the trip. These items reveal important information about them. Ask students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Photograph three items of their own that reveal something unique about them. In small groups, have students take turns showing their photographs and explaining the significance of their items. <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What was the most interesting thing you learned about your peers from the items they shared? Why do some objects have a deeper meaning than others? |
| | Connect to Essential Question | In “Scout’s Honor,” by Avi, three friends from Brooklyn, all Boy Scouts, go camping by themselves in the Palisades of New Jersey in order to earn merit badges and prove they are “tough.” But their trip turns out to be more of a challenge than they thought it would. |
| UNIT CONNECTION | Connect to Extended Writing Project | Students may find inspiration in Avi’s memoir about a scouting trip gone awry, and see how proper preparation can sometimes mitigate an unexpected challenge before it turns out to be a disaster. |

The Good Samaritan

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| AUTHOR | Name | René Saldaña, Jr. |
| | Gender | Male |
| QUALITATIVE FEATURES | Publication Date | 2007 |
| | Genre | Fictional |
| | Access Complex Text Features | <p>Purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The author’s purpose for writing the selection may be rather ambiguous to some students. Point out Mr. Hernandez’s reaction when Hernando calls him <i>vato</i> (dude). Then have students reread the last line of the story to determine how the narrator responds to Mr. Hernandez’s invitation and what that implies. |
| | | <p>Specific Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The selection contains some words in Spanish. Words and phrases such as <i>mejor con regresen mañana</i> (better come back tomorrow), <i>pues</i> (well), and <i>barrio</i> (neighborhood) may need to be defined. <p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some of the Spanish words in the text have connotations that may be unfamiliar to students. Point out that a <i>barrio</i> is a neighborhood where people usually know one another. This explains why Mr. Sanchez would walk around the neighborhood visiting. |
| QUANTITATIVE FEATURES | Lexile® | 720 |
| | Word Count | 2,553 |
| READER AND TASKS | Skill Lessons | Summarizing |
| | Close Read Prompt | Debate (Reflection): Rey lives up to the story’s title, “The Good Samaritan,” when he stops to help Mr. Sánchez. However, do you think Rey made the right decision in stopping to help? Summarize Rey’s experiences dealing with the Sánchez family and use them to prepare an argument for a debate. Use evidence from the text to support your position. |
| BEYOND THE BOOK | Beyond the Book Activity | <p>Performance: Betrayal and Forgiveness</p> <p>In “The Good Samaritan,” Rey feels betrayed by Mr. Sánchez. Pair students. Ask them to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reflect on a time when they experienced a betrayal. Design two short skits to act out these moments. Their performance should answer the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What happened? Who betrayed you? How did the betrayal make you feel? How did you respond to the betrayal? Did you forgive the person who betrayed you? <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How were these betrayals similar or different? Why is it hard for a child to forgive an adult who has betrayed them? |
| | | |
| UNIT CONNECTION | Connect to Essential Question | From René Saldaña, Jr.’s 2003 collection of short stories, “The Good Samaritan” is told through the eyes of a teenage boy named Rey. When his relationship with a neighborhood family turns sour, Rey soon finds himself faced with an age-old moral dilemma. |
| | Connect to Extended Writing Project | Students can use “The Good Samaritan” as a mentor text for their Extended Writing Project. They may adapt one of the themes René Saldaña, Jr. explores: that an unexpected challenge might sometimes come from within us. |

Jabberwocky

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| AUTHOR | Name | Lewis Carroll |
| | Gender | Male |
| QUALITATIVE FEATURES | Publication Date | 1872 |
| | Genre | Poetry |
| | Access Complex Text Features | <p>Genre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although it contains many made up words, the poem is a ballad written in four-line stanzas. The selection has four stressed syllables in each line and a regular ABAB, CDCD, EFEF rhyme scheme. <p>Purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Words are chosen and made up because of the way they sound together. The poem demonstrates a principle called open-endedness where users of a language create new words, such as combining lithe and slimy to make slithy. <p>Connection of Ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The poem has a slim narrative. A hero leaves home to test his bravery. He comes home triumphant. This plot has been treated over and over, from Beowulf to Lord of the Rings. |
| | | |
| QUANTITATIVE FEATURES | Lexile® | N/A |
| | Word Count | 166 |
| READER AND TASKS | Skill Lessons | N/A |
| | Close Read Prompt | <p>Poetry: The poem “Jabberwocky” uses nonsense language to describe a heroic battle. Choose three nonsensical words from the first stanza of “Jabberwocky” and create a definition for each based on context, sound, and the image you picture in your head. Then write a poem about a time you overcame an obstacle incorporating each of the three words.</p> |
| BEYOND THE BOOK | Beyond the Book Activity | <p>Writing: An Epic Battle</p> <p>Ask students to let their imaginations run wild and invent a monstrous creature.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What’s its name? What does it look like? Where does it live? What are some of its personality traits? <p>Once students have written a description and drawn a picture of their monster, ask them to write an epic poem in which a hero fights this creature. Their epic poems should use the same rhyme scheme as “Jabberwocky” (ABAB, CDCD, EFEF).</p> |
| UNIT CONNECTION | Connect to Essential Question | The first of three selections, Lewis Carroll’s whimsical poem “Jabberwocky” combines fantastical characters, invented language and formal structure to tell a heroic tale. Read alongside Gathering Blue and A Wrinkle in Time, students will consider how the language, setting, and events make the reader feel uncertain, and what steps the reader can take to better understand these selections. |
| | Connect to Extended Writing Project | As they craft their own narratives for the Extended Writing Project, students may find inspiration in Lewis Carroll’s unorthodox use of language as a way to depict a main character who faces an unexpected challenge. |

Gathering Blue

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| AUTHOR | Name | Lois Lowry |
| | Gender | Female |
| QUALITATIVE FEATURES | Publication Date | 2000 |
| | Genre | Fiction |
| | Access Complex Text Features | <p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students may not realize that the selection is a companion piece to a novel entitled <i>The Giver</i>. The societies in both selections are controlled by ruthless authorities. At the center of each is a young person who is given the responsibility of preserving the culture. <p>Connection of Ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some students may have difficulty synthesizing information throughout the text. Point out that the character Annabel is now called Annabella. This implies that the number of syllables in a person's name denotes their status. <p>Sentence Structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some students may have difficulty following the dialogue in the selection. They must infer when Jamison is speaking from the surrounding dialogue. In lines 14 and 20, the author italicizes the first sentence in each paragraph. These are meant to convey Kira's thoughts and not dialogue. |
| | Lexile® | 670 |
| QUANTITATIVE FEATURES | Word Count | 1,014 |
| READER AND TASKS | Skill Lessons | N/A |
| | Close Read Prompt | Personal Response: Think back to a challenge that you've faced in your life. How did you feel facing it? How were you able to respond? With that memory in mind, what advice would you give Kira from <i>Gathering Blue</i> to help her with the challenge she faces now? |
| BEYOND THE BOOK | Beyond the Book Activity | <p>Art: The Singer's Robe</p> <p>In preparation for creating their own singer's robe, invite students to think about the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What stories have you heard about your family growing up? Are there objects in your home that have a deeper meaning or symbolize something important for your family? Do you have family members living in different parts of the country or the world? Have you traveled to visit them? What traditions, however small, make your family unique? What moments in life have shaped your identity? What happened? How were you impacted? <p>Once students have had a chance to consider these questions, ask them to create a "Singer's Robe" to reflect their personal history, culture, and family using a mix of colors, images, and symbols.</p> |
| | Connect to Essential Question | In Lowry's futuristic novel, <i>Gathering Blue</i> , a crippled young girl named Kira fears she will be forced to leave because of her disability—but her talent for embroidery may earn her a role in society. As Kira's limits are tested in this excerpt of <i>Gathering Blue</i> , students will consider how to use context clues to understand the settings in "Jabberwocky" and <i>A Wrinkle in Time</i> as well. |
| UNIT CONNECTION | Connect to Extended Writing Project | Students may find inspiration in Lois Lowry's use of an unusual setting and a surprise ending as they discover that someone's worst possible day can turn out to be another character's best possible day. |

A Wrinkle in Time

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| AUTHOR | Name | Madeleine L'Engle |
| | Gender | Female |
| QUALITATIVE FEATURES | Publication Date | 1962 |
| | Genre | Fiction |
| | Access Complex Text Features | <p>Connection of Ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyzing the relationship between character and plot may prove difficult for some students. Suggest that students look for ways in which the decisions and actions of the characters alter or advance plot events and how the characters themselves change in response to events in the story. |
| | | <p>Specific Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some students may have difficulty with unfamiliar words, words with multiple meanings, and unusual constructions. Words and constructions such as once ten is ten and probed may need to be defined. <p>Sentence Structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Much of the red-eyed man's dialogue is not directly attributed to him. Students must infer the speaker from the surrounding dialogue and narration. Several of the sentences in the narration have multiple clauses and phrases. This may present problems for some students. |
| QUANTITATIVE FEATURES | Lexile® | 740 |
| | Word Count | 1,076 |
| READER AND TASKS | Skill Lessons | Context Clues |
| | Independent Read Prompt | Compare and Contrast: "Jabberwocky" and A Wrinkle in Time both have eerie language. A Wrinkle in Time and Gathering Blue both feature settings and events that make the reader feel uncertain. How does using context clues help you understand these unique selections? Compare the language and context clues you used in A Wrinkle in Time with those in one of the other two selections. Remember to support your ideas with evidence from the texts. |
| BEYOND THE BOOK | Beyond the Book Activity | <p>Game: Telepathy Battle</p> <p>Group students in pairs for a Telepathy Battle with a fictional character. Each pair will need to select (or create) a character to engage in the telepathy battle. Some places from which students might select characters include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unit texts, Pokemon, anime, video games, movies, etc. <p>Once students have selected their characters, they will decide how to engage in their telepathy battle. They can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perform a telepathy battle with a rehearsed blocking. Write a sensorily rich script of their internal dialogue. Draw a comic strip of their characters engaged in a battle using a mix of drawings and thought bubbles. |
| UNIT CONNECTION | Connect to Essential Question | Madeleine L'Engle's <i>A Wrinkle in Time</i> follows Meg Murry, her younger brother Charles Wallace, and their neighbor Calvin as they embark on a dangerous journey to find Meg and Charles' missing father. Students will compare <i>A Wrinkle in Time</i> to one other selection and consider how language and descriptions work to create a feeling of uncertainty, as well as how to use context clues to decipher unknown or unique language, settings, or events. |
| | Connect to Extended Writing Project | Students can use <i>A Wrinkle in Time</i> as a mentor text for their Extended Writing Project. They may explore how a sudden change in setting can lead to an unexpected challenge as they craft their own narrative. |

TEXT COMPLEXITY

UNIT 2: YOU AND ME

Unit Title: You and Me

Essential Question: How do relationships shape us?

Genre Focus: Poetry

Overview

Can you even count the number of relationships you have had in your life? Some relationships are close and others more distant, but the relationships in our lives teach us about the individuals around us. Even more important, our relationships can teach us a lot about ourselves.

What kinds of relationships do people have? Why are they important? Relationships with family, friends, and those around us can bring much joy, but they can also cause pain and frustration. What do readers learn when they study and analyze the relationships depicted in literary works? How can this help us with our own relationships?

Human bonds have been the subject of both fiction and nonfiction. They are often the subject of poetry. This unit offers a wide variety of literature about relationships for your students to explore, including a selection from the classic novel *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* by Mildred D. Taylor, a nonfiction letter to the editor, “We’re On the Same Team,” and poems such as “Teenagers” by Pat Mora and “A Poem for My Librarian, Mrs. Long” by Nikki Giovanni.

After reading stories, poems, and nonfiction selections about important relationships that had such a powerful impact they may have changed people’s lives, students will try their hand at writing an argumentative essay about a person who has affected their lives and their opinion regarding whether relationships can truly shape one’s future.

Text Complexity

Grade 6 Unit 2 builds on the skills established in the previous unit and further develops students’ text analysis abilities. The genre focus of this unit is poetry, but students will also read several fiction selections and an argumentative text. The prose selections of this unit fit in a Lexile band of 520 to 820 and bring together the theme of relationships with the formal structures of narrative fiction and argumentative writing. Additionally, the vocabulary, sentence structure, text features, content and relationships among ideas make these texts accessible to sixth graders, enabling them to grow as readers by interacting with such appropriately challenging texts.

Unit 2 begins with the text *Walk Two Moons*, where they will practice citing textual evidence to support inferences they make about the text. This text is followed by a reading of another, slightly higher-level text, *Roll of Thunder Hear My Cry*, which may challenge readers because of its emphasis on dialogue, specifically dialect and idiomatic

speech. Such difficulties are addressed through a lesson focused on connotation and denotation. The distinct narrative voices of both of these texts allow students to build the necessary skills to access the higher level poetic texts later in the unit.

“Teenagers” and “Tableau” follow the earlier fiction texts and should, at this point in the unit, be accessible to students. “Teenagers” may challenge students because it does not rhyme and is written in free verse. Accessible similes such as faces “open as sunflowers” allow students to parse out the feelings of the poem’s narrator and engage with skills lessons on figurative language and making inferences. “Tableau” is thematically linked to the previous text in that both focus on the changes of childhood, further immersing students in the theme of the unit. The ABAB rhyme scheme and iambic pentameter in this poem will feel familiar to students, making an analysis of the skills lesson on poetic elements and structure more approachable.

Two sets of texts in this unit are grouped together for Comparing Within and Across Genres. The Skills lessons, Close Read questions and writing activities for “The Voice in My Head” and “We’re on the Same Team” ask students to consider the value of mentorship and athletic abilities. The format of “The Voice in My Head” will be instantly accessible to most sixth graders and the short paragraph style will keep students engaged. One of the higher Lexiled texts in the unit, “We’re on the Same Team” is tempered by the fact that the center theme of the debate—how equal are males and females in sports?—is most likely to be of great interest to the class. This likely universal topical interest will facilitate skills building such as summarization abilities.

In a second set of texts, *The Circuit*, “That Day” and “A Poem for My Librarian, Mrs. Long” students will examine how a relationship can help change a person’s outlook and life. The autobiography *The Circuit* falls in the middle of the unit’s Lexile band and its thematic connection to relationships make it easy for students to compare and contrast it with the other texts. The poem “That Day” may challenge students due to it being written in free verse, however their earlier encounter with “Teenagers” should bolster their confidence. “A Poem for My Librarian, Mrs Long” will most likely be one of the least accessible texts in the unit. Reference to popular musicians from the 1950s and allusions to other pieces of literature may need additional explanation prior to students’ reading. This second group gives students the opportunity to apply the comparative thinking and writing skills they learned earlier in the unit to more complex texts from different genres.

English Language Learner Resources

Lessons in the English Language Learner Resources section offer explicit instruction. These lessons share a thematic and genre focus with all other lessons in the Core ELA unit.

The twenty ELL Resources are developed around two texts, “The Other Side” and “A Role to Play,” and an Extended Oral Project. Each text is written at four distinct levels. For ELLs, these texts serve as structural and thematic models of authentic texts in the Integrated Reading and Writing section of the unit. Thus, teachers may use the ELL texts in place of or as extensions for “Teenagers” and *The Circuit*.

ELL lessons modify the routines used with texts in the Integrated Reading and Writing section. Explicit vocabulary instruction is emphasized, and reading and writing Skills lessons focus strongly on language acquisition and reading comprehension.

After reading texts about the power of relationships, students will complete an Extended Oral Project that can be used in place of or as an extension to the Extended Writing Project. In this unit, students will plan and present a personal address expressing gratitude to a person who has impacted them.

Walk Two Moons

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| AUTHOR | Name | Sharon Creech |
| | Gender | Female |
| QUALITATIVE FEATURES | Publication Date | 994 |
| | Genre | Fiction |
| | Access Complex Text Features | <p>Organization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The selection contains brief flashbacks. Some students may have difficulty distinguishing between the main character's recollections of past events and what is taking place in the present. <p>Connection of Ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The selection is written in first-person limited, so readers only know what the main character thinks, feels, and hears. Assessing the motivations and actions of other characters in the story may prove difficult. <p>Sentence Structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The selection features some complex sentence structures. In some dialogue exchanges, who is speaking may need some clarification. |
| | | |
| QUANTITATIVE FEATURES | Lexile® | 520 |
| | Word Count | 878 |
| READER AND TASKS | Skill Lessons | Language, Style, and Audience, Textual Evidence, Generating Questions. |
| | Close Read Prompt | Narrative: Rewrite this excerpt of <i>Walk Two Moons</i> with Phoebe, Prudence, or Mrs. Winterbottom as the narrator instead of Sal. Use evidence explicitly stated in the text, as well as inferences drawn from the text, to identify the narrator's relationship with the other characters. In your narrative, select language that reflects an appropriate tone for the narrator you choose. |
| BEYOND THE BOOK | Beyond the Book Activity | <p>Writing and Discussion: Parent Appreciation</p> <p>In <i>Walk Two Moons</i>, Sal can see how Phoebe and Prudence take their mother, Mrs. Winterbottom, for granted. Ask students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a list of all the things their parents or guardians do for them on a daily basis. Form small groups and discuss the following questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you take your parents or guardians for granted? How often do you tell your parents or guardians you appreciate them? Why is it so common for kids to take parents or guardians for granted? Reflect in writing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prior to this activity, did you feel like you took your parents or guardians for granted? What can you do to let them know you appreciate what they do for you? |
| UNIT CONNECTION | Connect to Essential Question | In this story, a young girl named Sal is racked with guilt because she thinks she is responsible when her mother leaves the family. Would Sal's relationship with her mother have been different if Sal hadn't yelled at her the last time she saw her? |
| | Connect to Extended Writing Project | Students can use <i>Walk Two Moons</i> as a mentor text for their Extended Writing Project. They may analyze Sharon Creech's methods for developing relationships among characters as they reflect on the nature of their own personal relationships. |

Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| AUTHOR | Name | Mildred D. Taylor |
| | Gender | Female |
| QUALITATIVE FEATURES | Publication Date | 1976 |
| | Genre | Fiction |
| | Access Complex Text Features | <p>Connection of Ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The majority of plot events in the selection are revealed through dialogue. Students will need to make connections between what the characters say and how the dialogue drives the events of the plot. <p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The events in the selection are directly tied to its setting, and students may not be aware of the economic inequalities of sharecropping or the grave effects of the Great Depression on African Americans. The significance of Thurston Wallace’s power over the other characters may need explication. <p>Sentence Structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students may find the use of dialect and any deviations from standard English challenging. Discuss the meanings of specific words and analyze what dialect reveals about the characters and what it contributes to the story. |
| | | |
| QUANTITATIVE FEATURES | Lexile® | 820 |
| | Word Count | 1,384 |
| READER AND TASKS | Skill Lessons | Connotation and Denotation, Theme, Story Structure |
| | Close Read Prompt | <p>Discussion: In this excerpt, the author builds and releases tension through events in the plot. With each new challenge that the characters have to face, a new theme is revealed or suggested. Overall, do you feel that the author’s themes, or messages, are positive or negative? As you prepare for your discussion, use specific parts of the text as well as supporting details to help you form an opinion. Additionally, include any lingering questions you have regarding characters and events.</p> |
| BEYOND THE BOOK | Beyond the Book Activity | <p>Art: Social Hierarchy Tree</p> <p>This excerpt ends with Papa using the three trees on their property to make a point about life as an African American in the Deep South. Ask students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Think about different groups in society today who are marginalized, or have less power. Draw a picture representing different groups in society and their levels of power using the tree metaphor. <p>When students have completed their visuals, break them into groups of four, and allow them time to present their visuals.</p> <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did your group members identify the same groups in society or were there differences? What was most challenging about representing the different levels of power using the tree as a metaphor? |
| | | |
| UNIT CONNECTION | Connect to Essential Question | A young black girl who lives in the South during the Great Depression begins to learn about the realities of racism. She has a close relationship with her family, but she wonders if they can they continue to carry on with the injustices she sees happening all around them. |
| | Connect to Extended Writing Project | Students can use <i>Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry</i> as a mentor text for their Extended Writing Project. They may consider using dialogue, as Mildred D. Taylor does to illustrate relationships between characters, if they wish to include things that a family member or friend has said that made an impact on them. |

Teenagers

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| AUTHOR | Name | Pat Mora |
| | Gender | Female |
| QUALITATIVE FEATURES | Publication Date | 1991 |
| | Genre | Poetry |
| | Access Complex Text Features | <p>Connection of Ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The author uses many examples of figurative language. Students may have difficulty using the figurative language the author employs to make inferences about characters and motivation. <p>Organization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The selection is written in first-person limited, so readers only know what the main character thinks, feels, and hears. This may present a challenge when students try to assess the motivations and conflicts of other characters. <p>Genre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The poem is an example of free verse. It follows the rhythm of natural speech without consistent meter patterns and rhymes. Students may have difficulty identifying the three stanzas as three separate time periods in a teenager's emotional development. |
| | Lexile® | N/A |
| QUANTITATIVE FEATURES | Word Count | 73 |
| | Skill Lessons | Making Inferences, Figurative Language |
| READER AND TASKS | Close Read Prompt | <p>Literary Analysis: In the poem “Teenagers,” a parent talks about her teenage children and how they have changed over time. How does the poem show the speaker’s character? Identify examples of figurative language that help the reader understand the speaker. Respond using evidence from the text.</p> |
| | Beyond the Book Activity | <p>Writing: Copy Change</p> <p>Copy Change is a way to use the structure of other poets’ poems to create new poems with new meaning for ourselves. Ask students to use the structure of “Teenagers” to compose their own poem about a new subject: their parents or guardians. Ask students to write from the perspective of a teenager.</p> <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did your relationship with your parents or guardians inspire parts of this poem? Do you like writing copy change poems where you have some structure but get to fill in the blanks with your own words, or do you prefer to write poems without having a structure from? |
| UNIT CONNECTION | Connect to Essential Question | In this poem, a mother reflects on how the children she has raised suddenly become strangers to her, silent and secretive teenagers, until one day they emerge from their silence as young adults, glowing “almost like pearls.” |
| | Connect to Extended Writing Project | Students can use “Teenagers” as a mentor text for their Extended Writing Project. The speaker in Pat Mora’s poem illustrates the point of view of a parent watching her child grow up. Students may consider the perspective of a parent or older family member as they describe a similar relationship in their letter. |

Tableau

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|
| AUTHOR | Name | Countee Cullen |
| | Gender | Male |
| QUALITATIVE FEATURES | Publication Date | 1925 |
| | Genre | Poetry |
| | Access Complex Text Features | <p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Tableau” was published in 1925 during the Harlem Renaissance. • Cullen writes of the challenges blacks and whites faced attempting to forge relationships when segregation was still the law of the land. <p>Connection of Ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The author uses many similes and metaphors in the poem. • The use of figurative language and its connection to the theme may prove challenging. For example, the metaphors comparing the boys to thunder and lightning question society’s disdain by associating them with two things that go together in the natural world. <p>Genre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The poem’s rhyme scheme is ABAB. • The use of iambic pentameter gives the poem a natural and familiar lilt. This further emphasizes how natural it should be to see a black boy and a white boy walking hand in hand. |
| | Lexile® | N/A |
| QUANTITATIVE FEATURES | Word Count | 71 |
| READER AND TASKS | Skill Lessons | Adjusting Fluency, Poetic Elements and Structure |
| | Close Read Prompt | Literary Analysis: In “Tableau,” the poet Countee Cullen describes an unlikely pair of friends. How does the poet use specific stanzas and lines to focus on the theme of friendship? Use evidence from the text to support your response. |
| BEYOND THE BOOK | Beyond the Book Activity | <p>Research Project: Social Taboos</p> <p>Assign small groups a country and ask them to research a social taboo in their assigned country. After students select a social taboo, request that they pitch their idea for approval to ensure they are focusing on appropriate topics. In their pitch, they should address the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the social taboo? • Why is the behavior or social interaction considered taboo? • What does it reveal about the country’s culture? <p>Upon receiving approval, groups will create a tableau. The name “tableau” comes from the term tableau vivant which means “living picture.” In this activity, students create a still picture, without talking, to capture and communicate the meaning of the social taboo. Have groups take turns acting out their tableau.</p> <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which social taboo was most interesting or surprising? • What social taboos exist in the United States? How are they similar or different? |
| | UNIT CONNECTION | Connect to Essential Question |
| Connect to Extended Writing Project | | Students can use Countee Cullen’s poem “Tableau” as a mentor text for their Extended Writing Project, and consider how relationships that fly in the face of certain conventions can still be rewarding and shape our lives. |

The Voice in My Head

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| AUTHOR | Name | Holly Warlick |
| | Gender | Female |
| QUALITATIVE FEATURES | Publication Date | 2017 |
| | Genre | Informational |
| | Access Complex Text Features | <p>Genre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students may struggle with the poem's structure, given that it is one long stanza with short lines and frequent enjambment, and there is no rhyme or meter. Have students read the poem aloud in continuous sentences. <p>Specific Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some related to basketball, such as dribbling drills, full-court vs. half-court, and "suicides" may need to be explained to students. <p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A short overview of basketball and the history of women's sports may be helpful to students who are unfamiliar with these topics. |
| | | |
| QUANTITATIVE FEATURES | Lexile® | 690 |
| | Word Count | 1,983 |
| READER AND TASKS | Skill Lessons | N/A |
| | Close Read Prompt | Personal Response: Why do you think it's important to have mentors in your life? Write a response in which you answer this question. Use examples from the essay "The Voice in My Head" to support your response. |
| BEYOND THE BOOK | Beyond the Book Activity | <p>Writing: Who is the Voice in Your Head?</p> <p>Students will identify a person in their lives who has had a significant impact on them and consider what they've learned from that person.</p> <p>Ask students to think about the most influential people in their lives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who has challenged them the most? Whose voice do they hear inside their head when they are faced with one of life's many challenges? How has this person impacted their life and the choices they've made? <p>Ask them to write this person a letter to say how this person has influenced their lives. Remind them to include specific examples of situations they have faced and how the lessons they've learned from this person have helped them to navigate these moments or challenges. Encourage students to send the final drafts of their letters!</p> |
| | | |
| UNIT CONNECTION | Connect to Essential Question | The essay "The Voice in My Head" describes a relationship between a basketball player and her coach. Holly Warlick remembers her basketball coach in a heartfelt tribute, despite their relationship having a rocky start. |
| | Connect to Extended Writing Project | Students can find inspiration from "The Voice in My Head" for their informative essays. Have students discuss what they think are the important moments in the essay and explain how those moments changed everything for Holly Warlick. |

We're on the Same Team

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| AUTHOR | Name | Jacki Jing |
| | Gender | Female |
| QUALITATIVE FEATURES | Publication Date | 2017 |
| | Genre | Informational |
| | Access Complex Text Features | <p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The game of volleyball may be unfamiliar to some students. Volleyball is a game for two teams, usually comprised of six players each, in which a large ball is hit by hand over a net. The aim is to score points by making the ball reach the ground on the opponent's side of the net. |
| | | <p>Genre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The selection is written as a personal opinion in the form of an argument. Students may not be familiar with some of the features of an argument, such as a <i>claim</i>. <p>Specific Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acronyms associated with basketball and volleyball appear in the selection. Acronyms such as <i>NCAA</i>, <i>NBA</i>, and <i>WNBA</i> may need to be defined. |
| QUANTITATIVE FEATURES | Lexile® | 760 |
| | Word Count | 632 |
| READER AND TASKS | Skill Lessons | Summarizing |
| | Close Read Prompt | <p>Informative: In the essay “The Voice in My Head” by Holly Warlick and the letter to the editor “We’re On the Same Team” by Jacki Jing, both authors write about the ways they have worked hard in athletics and in life. In a blog post of your own, summarize the ways that each author had to work hard, including challenges they faced and what helped them succeed. Then, explain a situation where you had to work hard to achieve a goal. Include any setbacks you had and how you finally managed to succeed. Be sure to provide textual evidence from the two texts and your own personal experiences to convey your ideas.</p> |
| BEYOND THE BOOK | Beyond the Book Activity | <p>Performance: The 30 Second Elevator Speech</p> <p>The 30 Second Elevator Speech is a clear, brief message about you. It communicates who you are, what you are arguing, and why others should see your argument from your point of view. What if Jacki Jing only had 30 seconds to share her message with the SportsNews Editor?</p> <p>Ask students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Imagine they are Jing and have just run into the SportsNews Editor in an elevator. Adapt Jing’s letter into a 30 Second Elevator Speech. Incorporate Jing’s tone and argument in order to communicate her message in an effective and memorable way. <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What words did you feel were essential to communicating Jing’s message? What was the most difficult part? What is the benefit of being able to communicate an important message in 30 seconds or less? |
| | | |
| UNIT CONNECTION | Connect to Essential Question | In the letter “We’re On the Same Team,” the author Jacki Jing deals with a misunderstanding in regards to the difficulty of her sport, volleyball. She describes what volleyball has taught her, even in life beyond the court. |
| | Connect to Extended Writing Project | Students can use <i>We’re on the Same Team</i> as a mentor text for their Extended Writing Project, and analyze how Jacki Jing supports her argument. They can also reflect on how playing volleyball helped Jacki to establish important relationships in her life, and how sports may have impacted relationships in their own lives. |

The Treasure of Lemon Brown

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| AUTHOR | Name | Walter Dean Myers |
| | Gender | Male |
| QUALITATIVE FEATURES | Publication Date | 1983 |
| | Genre | Fiction |
| | Access Complex Text Features | <p>Organization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The story opens with a flashback to an earlier time that interrupts the logical order of events. Notice these clues (“His father’s voice came to him again” and “that had been two nights before”) in paragraphs 1 and 5 that mark the start and end of the flashback and how it introduces the conflict. <p>Specific Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some terms may be unfamiliar to students. Explain that “the blues” is a musical form begun by African Americans. The Salvation Army is a charitable organization. <p>Sentence Structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some students may need assistance following the dialogue. Point out that the three intruders are not differentiated as separate, distinct characters, so it’s only important that they appear as a united threat. |
| | | |
| QUANTITATIVE FEATURES | Lexile® | 760 |
| | Word Count | 3,366 |
| READER AND TASKS | Skill Lessons | Point of View |
| | Close Read Prompt | <p>Argumentative: Three men, one carrying a length of pipe, arrive at the abandoned building to steal Lemon Brown’s treasure. Lemon, with Greg’s help, scares them off. Does the author reveal enough about Lemon Brown’s treasure for the reader to understand its importance? Do you think Lemon Brown’s treasure is worth fighting for? Why or why not? Defend your point of view with evidence from the text.</p> |
| BEYOND THE BOOK | Beyond the Book Activity | <p>Discussion: 4 Corner Conversation about Treasures</p> <p>Count students off by four and ask all of the 1s to form a group, all of the 2s form a group, and so on. Each group should sit in a circle to discuss the following questions. Remind them to reference specific moments in the text to support their ideas as they contribute to the conversation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How would you define treasure after reading this short story? What makes a “treasure” valuable? Why do you think Greg smiles at the end when he thinks of his father giving him a lecture? Have you ever learned a life lesson from an unlikely source? |
| | | |
| UNIT CONNECTION | Connect to Essential Question | Teenager Greg Ridley meets Lemon Brown, a homeless man who claims he has a treasure. Soon Greg discovers that Brown’s treasure will help him discover what he treasures most. |
| | Connect to Extended Writing Project | Students can use <i>The Treasure of Lemon Brown</i> as a mentor text for their Extended Writing Project. They may analyze Walter Dean Myers’s methods for developing relationships, including the use of flashback to establish Greg’s frame of mind when he meets Lemon Brown, and how it influences what the encounter means to Greg. |

The Circuit: Stories from the Life of a Migrant Child

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| AUTHOR | Name | Francisco Jimenez |
| | Gender | Male |
| QUALITATIVE FEATURES | Publication Date | 1997 |
| | Genre | Fiction |
| | Access Complex Text Features | <p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The selection focuses on the lives of California migrant workers during the 1950s. The nomadic way of life of California migrant workers, who were primarily immigrants from Mexico, may need further explanation. <p>Genre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The text is an autobiographical novel. Explain the difference between an autobiographical novel and autobiography. The first blends fact with fiction, and includes dialogue or isolated fictional events in order to make a more satisfying story. The second is a first-person account of the author's life and contains no fiction. <p>Specific Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The selection contains many words and phrases in Spanish. Words such as <i>bracero</i> (a Mexican migrant worker) and <i>mi olla</i> (my pot) may need translation in lieu of context clues. |
| | | |
| QUANTITATIVE FEATURES | Lexile® | 730 |
| | Word Count | 2,332 |
| READER AND TASKS | Skill Lessons | N/A |
| | Close Read Prompt | <p>Personal Response: In <i>The Circuit</i>, Francisco and his family are constantly moving. Each time Francisco's family moves, he feels sad to leave yet another place behind. At school, Francisco finds stability with a teacher, Mr. Lema, who helps him with reading. Have you ever moved? If so, how did it make you feel? If not, think about something in your life that is stable and consistent. How does it contribute to your happiness? How do your feelings compare or contrast with Francisco's? Use newly acquired vocabulary and evidence from the text to support your response.</p> |
| BEYOND THE BOOK | Beyond the Book Activity | <p>Photography: If You Could Only Take 3 Items</p> <p>Ask students to imagine they have to pack up and move every few months. They have limited space to pack sentimental items, and can only carry three along. What would they take? Why? Ask students to identify their items, photograph each, and share that photo with a brief explanation of its significance.</p> <p>Allow students time to explore each others' pictures, then place them in small groups to discuss their choices.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What did you decide to bring? What is significant about these three items? Which items were you tempted to include but didn't? <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> After seeing what your peers selected, would you change any of your choices? What did you learn about the individuals in our class based on their choices? |
| | | |
| UNIT CONNECTION | Connect to Essential Question | Thematically linked to "That Day" and "A Poem for My Librarian, Mrs. Long" in its exploration of a mentor relationship that changes a life, Francisco Jimenez' autobiographical novel <i>The Circuit</i> follows the life of a young migrant who is forced to move frequently to find work. |
| | Connect to Extended Writing Project | Francisco Jiménez paints a vivid picture of life as a migrant worker using descriptive language. Prompt students to notice striking words, phrases, and sentences that illustrate the people, places, and events in Jiménez's life most clearly. Such descriptions will help students craft descriptive details in their own letters. |

That Day

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| AUTHOR | Name | David Kherdian |
| | Gender | Male |
| QUALITATIVE FEATURES | Publication Date | 1978 |
| | Genre | Poetry |
| | Access Complex Text Features | <p>Genre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The selection is written in free verse. You may need to point out to some students that free verse does not rhyme or have a regular meter. <p>Sentence Structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students may need assistance analyzing the poem. The selection is composed of two stanzas, and each stanza consists of one long, continuous sentence. <p>Specific Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Certain words in the poem have multiple meanings. The word <i>fabric</i>, for example, as Kherdian uses it, means “structure” or “framework” as well as a bolt of cloth. |
| | Lexile® | N/A |
| QUANTITATIVE FEATURES | Word Count | 88 |
| | Skill Lessons | N/A |
| READER AND TASKS | Close Read Prompt | Personal Response: Using “That Day” as an inspiration, write about a memory in which you learned something valuable about a family member or friend. Borrow key language from the poem to describe what you saw and felt, along with details and descriptions of your own. |
| | Beyond the Book Activity | <p>Performance: Living Separate Lives Together</p> <p>Put students into small groups and ask them to write the first two scenes of a play focused on exploring the separate lives that kids and parents lead despite living in the same home. Remind them to think about the following details:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How old are the kids in this play? Where does this family live? What do the parents do for a living? What issues or tensions exist in the family? <p>Remind students to include stage directions in addition to their dialogue. Once they’ve written their scenes, allow students time to practice before they perform their scenes for the class.</p> <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What similarities did you notice between the various scenes? What common tensions exist between parents and their kids? Which aspect of this assignment was most challenging (e.g., writing dialogue, writing stage directions, performing it)? |
| UNIT CONNECTION | Connect to Essential Question | Relationships between parents and their children can be unique. Poet David Kherdian reflects about what happened on “That Day” between himself and his father. The poem “That Day” continues to push students to explore the theme of life changing-relationships. |
| | Connect to Extended Writing Project | Students can find inspiration from David Kherdian for their letters. Have them mimic Kherdian’s style as they describe a moment or event that illustrates a personal relationship. |

A Poem for My Librarian, Mrs. Long

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| AUTHOR | Name | Nikki Giovanni |
| | Gender | Female |
| QUALITATIVE FEATURES | Publication Date | 2007 |
| | Genre | Poetry |
| | Access Complex Text Features | <p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Several singers are mentioned that students may not know. These singers, popular in the 1950s, place the poem in a specific time period. The jfg sign is an advertisement for coffee that still stands in Knoxville, Tennessee. References like this locate the setting of the poem in a real place. <p>Connection of Ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a literary allusion that may be unfamiliar to some students. Giovanni mentions opening a wardrobe, but there are no witches or lions inside it. This is a reference to the world of Narnia that C.S. Lewis created. <p>Specific Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The poem contains several specialized vocabulary words. The “main black corridor” refers to a street where many African Americans lived. A stereoscope combined two photos to create a three dimensional effect. |
| | | |
| QUANTITATIVE FEATURES | Lexile® | N/A |
| | Word Count | 339 |
| READER AND TASKS | Skill Lessons | Compare and Contrast |
| | Close Read Prompt | Compare and Contrast: What theme do The Circuit, “That Day,” and “A Poem for My Librarian, Mrs. Long” have in common? Write a response in which you compare and contrast each text’s theme. Remember to support your ideas with evidence from all three texts, and use newly acquired vocabulary as appropriate. |
| BEYOND THE BOOK | Beyond the Book Activity | <p>Writing: A World Without Devices</p> <p>Ask students to write a poem about what they would do with their time if phones, computers, or devices did not exist.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How would you spend your time in a world without devices? Who would you spend more time with? What might the benefits be of living without devices? How might it change your perspective on family, friends, school, and/or life? <p>Once students have written their poems, ask them to publish them by reading them out loud or posting them online for an audience.</p> <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did anything about these poems surprise you? Given the impact technology has had on your life and your perspective on it, when is the best time for a child to have access to devices? |
| | | |
| UNIT CONNECTION | Connect to Essential Question | Strong relationships can form between almost any two people. In the poem “A Poem for My Librarian, Mrs. Long” by Nikki Giovanni, she reflects on how a librarian in her segregated Southern town helps change the direction of her life when she manages to borrow books for her that Nikki might not have read otherwise. |
| | Connect to Extended Writing Project | Reading might not seem like a “revolutionary act,” but it is to the speaker of Nikki Giovanni’s poem. When considering to whom they will write their letters, prompt students to create a list of characteristics of people who leave an impact, such as Mrs. Long. |

TEXT COMPLEXITY

UNIT 3: IN THE DARK

Unit Title: In The Dark

Essential Question: How do you know what to do when there are no instructions?

Genre Focus: Informational Text

Overview

Darkness is associated with the unknown and the unknowable. It can be real, like an unexplored cave, or something like the unknown events that the future may bring. Darkness inspires fear and encourages uncertainty, yet some people find it safer to remain there. They would rather be “in the dark” than to take steps to try to “see the light.”

Is darkness a place to live in, run from, or explore? What qualities does a person need in order to “face the darkness”? How does facing the darkness affect or change a person? How does one finally reach the decision to take action in the face of uncertainty?

This unit offers a mixture of texts, both fiction and nonfiction, about people that face uncertainty, including the classic myth *Heroes Every Child Should Know: Perseus*, Rick Riordan’s *The Lightning Thief*, and Carl Hiaasen’s *Hoot*. Nonfiction by and about real individuals include the nonfiction texts “Hatshepsut: His Majesty, Herself” by Catherine M. Andronik, “Everybody Jump (from What If)” by Randall Munroe, “Dare to be Creative!” by Madeleine L’Engle, “Margaret Bourke-White: Fearless Photographer,” and “Donna O’Meara: The Volcano Lady.”

After reading the stories and informational texts about individuals and characters that take action in the face of uncertainty, students will have the opportunity to write an informative essay. In their essays, students will identify three individuals or characters from the unit texts and explore their motivations.

Text Complexity

Grade 6 Unit 3 finds students pivoting away from narrative texts and looking more closely at informative writing. Although the genre focus of this unit is informational texts, students will also have the opportunity to read a handful of fiction and poetry selections. The selections in this unit fall in a Lexile band of 710-1100, with most texts residing in the 860-1040 range. Students will most likely be challenged by the specialized vocabulary and required prior knowledge for many of these texts and could benefit from detailed discussions about these things throughout the unit. The sentence structures, text features, content and relationships among ideas make these selections accessible to sixth graders, encouraging them to dig deeper as readers by engaging with texts of varying difficulty.

The first two texts in this unit fall in the middle of the Lexile band range and are made further accessible by both featuring mythology in their narratives. *Heroes Every Child Should Know: Perseus* may confuse students with its mentioning of various figures from Greek mythology and accessing it could be made easier by a discussion of these figures. Additionally, this text contains complex sentence structures with semicolons used to connect clauses. These challenges are offset by a lesson on visualizing as a means of reading comprehension. *The Lightning Thief* is a lower Lexile text in this unit that also features greek mythology. Student's may have difficulty with the text's flashbacks but should be reminded that this is an excerpt from a multi-chapter book. Both of these texts will establish students abilities to visualize for reading comprehension, as well as looking at the ways story structure and character advance a narrative.

For the purposes of Comparing Within and Across Genres, we have grouped the poem "Elena" with the nonfiction text "Hatshepsut: His Majesty, Herself". Although each text rests on either end of the Lexile spectrum for this unit, and occupies different genres, both focus on women struggling to maintain control. "Hatshepsut: His Majesty, Herself" is an interesting counterpoint to "Elena", but will challenge students on a variety of levels. Skills lessons on Greek and Latin affixes and a text's central or main idea will mitigate this text's extensive use of terms related to ancient Egyptian history. Accessing these texts of varying difficulty will allow students to explain the myriad of ways that female empowerment can be displayed.

Students will continue exploring the unit's main theme of individuals facing the unknown through continuing to read fiction and informational texts. "I, Too" by Langston Hughes presents students with the metaphor of America as a dining table where not all people have permission to sit. Skill lessons on poetic elements and structure, as well as a lesson on media that involves comparing the written poem to an audio recording of it, give students the background to truly dissect this poem. In "Everybody Jump (from *What If*)" students will read about science as a former NASA computer programmer and roboticist explains what would happen if everyone on earth jumped at the same time. The scientific concepts and language in this text is read alongside skills lessons in technical language and informational text structure, facilitating greater accessibility. Hoot is a fiction selection that ties back to earlier texts by showing a character who moves to a new and different place.

"Donna O'Meara: The Volcano Lady," "Dare to be Creative!" and "Margaret Bourke-White: Fearless Photographer" are three nonfiction texts that range in a higher Lexile band of 940-1110. These texts are grouped for Comparison Within and Across Genres and students will use them to eventually compare and contrast the main motivation for each individual to do something other people see as impossible. "Donna O'Meara" and "Margaret Bourke-White" are both biographies, though students will notice a variation in tone between the selections. "Dare to be Creative!" is a personal essay with an inspirational theme. Each of these texts are tied together by an additional skills lesson on textual evidence.

English Language Learner Resources

Lessons in the English Language Learner Resources section offer explicit instruction. These lessons share a thematic and genre focus with all other lessons in the Core ELA unit.

The twenty ELL Resources are developed around two texts, “Tracking Down Typhoid Mary” and “The Notice,” and an Extended Oral Project. Each text is written at four distinct levels. For ELLs, these texts serve as structural and thematic models of authentic texts in the Integrated Reading and Writing section of the unit. Thus, teachers may use the ELL texts in place of or as extensions for *An American Plague* and *Fever 1793*.

ELL lessons modify the routines used with texts in the Integrated Reading and Writing section. Explicit vocabulary instruction is emphasized, and reading and writing Skills lessons focus strongly on language acquisition and reading comprehension.

After reading texts about dealing with the uncertain, students will complete an Extended Oral Project that can be used in place of or as an extension to the Extended Writing Project. In this unit, students will plan and present a short biography of someone who overcame an uncertain, challenging situation.

Heroes Every Child Should Know: Perseus

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| AUTHOR | Name | Hamilton Wright Mabie |
| | Gender | Male |
| QUALITATIVE FEATURES | Publication Date | 1914 |
| | Genre | Fiction |
| | Access Complex Text Features | <p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The references to various figures from Greek mythology, such as Perseus, Athene, Hermes, and Atlas, are likely to be unfamiliar to students. Hermes alludes to himself as the “Argus-slayer.” Share with students the story of how and why Hermes killed the hundred-eyed Argus. <p>Connection of Ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This myth follows a common but sometimes confusing structure, the hero’s quest, in which the hero travels from place to place until he obtains or kills what he has been searching for. There are so many places Perseus must go and so many beings he must question that it will be hard to keep the stages in his journey straight. <p>Sentence Structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students may be confused by the archaic sentence structures used in this text, such as “Touch me not.” Most of the sentences are quite long and use semicolons to connect clauses. |
| | | |
| QUANTITATIVE FEATURES | Lexile® | 950 |
| | Word Count | 2,459 |
| READER AND TASKS | Skill Lessons | Visualizing, Character, Word Meaning |
| | Close Read Prompt | Literary Analysis: How do Perseus’s responses to individuals and events drive the action of the plot forward? Support your writing with evidence from the text. |
| BEYOND THE BOOK | Beyond the Book Activity | <p>Art: Graphic Story</p> <p><i>In Heroes Every Child Should Know: Perseus</i>, the author uses rich detail to tell the story of Perseus and Medusa. Students will transform this text into a graphic story.</p> <p>Ask students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Divide the story into sections (e.g. Athene’s explanation of how Medusa became a monster, Perseus’ conversation with Hermes). Create a draft of a storyboard with quick sketches depicting each scene. Select dialogue from the excerpt to include in your graphic story. Decide which scenes need captions. <p>Once students have completed a rough draft of their storyboard, they should take their rough sketches and turn them into a polished graphic story complete with colorful illustrations and text adapted from the excerpt. Students can use pen and paper or an online comic creator to create their stories.</p> |
| | | |
| UNIT CONNECTION | Connect to Essential Question | What steps does someone follow in order to become a hero? In this popular Greek myth, readers learn about the tasks Perseus must perform in order for him to become a hero. |
| | Connect to Extended Writing Project | Students can use <i>Heroes Every Child Should Know: Perseus</i> as a mentor text for their Extended Writing Project. They may adopt the author’s use of chronological order to structure the information in their essays. |

The Lightning Thief

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| AUTHOR | Name | Rick Riordan |
| | Gender | Male |
| QUALITATIVE FEATURES | Publication Date | 2005 |
| | Genre | Fiction |
| | Access Complex Text Features | <p>Genre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The Lightning Thief</i> is a contemporary fantasy in which the world of Greek gods is recreated in modern times. Impossible things happen alongside ordinary things, which may make the story hard to grasp. <p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The excerpt is set in Montauk, an area of beaches in New York that may be unfamiliar to students. References to figures prevalent in Greek mythology, including Hercules and Poseidon and their functions, may need explanation. <p>Organization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students may struggle with flashbacks — breaks in a narrative that recount previous events in the story. Remind students that they are reading chapter 3, so they should make inferences about events and people who have been introduced previously. |
| | | |
| QUANTITATIVE FEATURES | Lexile® | 740 |
| | Word Count | 1,181 |
| READER AND TASKS | Skill Lessons | Story Structure |
| | Close Read Prompt | <p>Discussion: How does this excerpt from <i>The Lightning Thief</i> connect to the overall structure of the story? What hints does the author provide about the overall plot and theme? Think about how the author uses flashbacks to describe Percy's past, Percy's thoughts, and Percy's dialogue with his mother. As you prepare for your discussion, be sure to find plenty of textual evidence to support your ideas.</p> |
| BEYOND THE BOOK | Beyond the Book Activity | <p>Game: Percy's Perils</p> <p>Using details from Percy's life combined with researched information about Greek mythology and the gods, students should work collaboratively to create a board game in which Percy attempts to find his father while avoiding pitfalls and villains.</p> <p>Break students into small groups and ask them to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brainstorm the various pitfalls Percy might encounter on his search for his father. Research Greek mythology and the gods to gather information they can use in their game. Decide on the format of their game. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will the players draw cards or roll dice? What colors, images, icons or pieces will they need? Create their game using art materials in the classroom. <p>Once the games have been finished, spend a class period allowing groups to play each other's games and provide anonymous feedback on paper or online about what they enjoyed about each game and how each game could be improved.</p> |
| | | |
| UNIT CONNECTION | Connect to Essential Question | How can a twelve-year-old boy become a hero? Find out what happens when the ancient Greek gods play a role in the life of a young boy who lives today. |
| | Connect to Extended Writing Project | Students can use <i>The Lightning Thief</i> as a mentor text for their Extended Writing Project. They may adapt how the author, Rick Riordan, uses dialogue. |

Elena

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| AUTHOR | Name | Pat Mora |
| | Gender | Male |
| QUALITATIVE FEATURES | Publication Date | 1994 |
| | Genre | Poetry |
| | Access Complex Text Features | <p>Connection of Ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students will need to make inferences to interpret the meaning of the poem. For example, they will need to understand that the reference to being deaf is a metaphor. <p>Specific Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The use of Spanish in the poem may cause difficulties for students unfamiliar with the Spanish language. <p>Purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> While the primary purpose of the poem is to express the speaker's emotional struggle, it also contains themes about cultural assimilation and language barriers. Students may struggle to understand the theme as well as the speaker's tone. A discussion about the the speaker's feelings of frustration and isolation will help students to grasp the the tone, theme, and purpose of the poem. |
| | | |
| QUANTITATIVE FEATURES | Lexile® | N/A |
| | Word Count | 145 |
| READER AND TASKS | Skill Lessons | N/A |
| | Close Read Prompt | Poetry: The poem “Elena” is told from the mother’s point of view. Write a poem in response to the mother from the perspective of one of her children. |
| BEYOND THE BOOK | Beyond the Book Activity | <p>Debate: Digital Divide and Its Impact on Families</p> <p>Are social media creating a digital divide that is hurting families?</p> <p>Pair students up and assign each partner a pro or con position. Then ask them to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research the impacts of social media on all ages. Develop a formal argument in favor of their position with clear claims and evidence. Rehearse their statements separately. <p>Then allow each pair to engage in a formal debate and allow the class to anonymously vote on paper or online for the position they felt was strongest.</p> <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If you had to argue a position you disagree with, how did you generate your claims? What process did you go through to ensure the information you found online was credible? |
| | | |
| UNIT CONNECTION | Connect to Essential Question | In the poem, “Elena,” a mother worries about the potential loss of communication with her children and strives to overcome their language barrier by learning English. |
| | Connect to Extended Writing Project | Students can use “Elena” as inspiration for their Extended Writing Project. Ask students to discuss and take notes on what lessons they can glean from the poem about love and loss. Have students focus on the conflict within a parent-child relationship that bridges two different cultures and languages. |

Hatshepsut, His Majesty, Herself

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| AUTHOR | Name | Catherine M. Andronik |
| | Gender | Female |
| QUALITATIVE FEATURES | Publication Date | 2001 |
| | Genre | Informational |
| | Access Complex Text Features | <p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The text is about events that took place in ancient Egypt 3,500 years ago. Students may need additional information about the role of the pharaoh in Egyptian society and also ancient Egyptian funerary beliefs and practices. <p>Genre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remind students that a biography is the true story of a real person's life written by someone else. Review with students the features of a biography, such as chronological text structure, point of view, historical context, and direct and indirect description. This biography introduces the Egyptian pharaoh Hatshepsut and describes her life and her accomplishments. <p>Specific Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The pronunciation of ancient Egyptian names, such as <i>Hatshepsut</i> and <i>Mutnofret</i>, may have to be sounded out for students. The term <i>Maat</i> refers to the ancient Egyptian concepts of truth, balance, order, harmony, law, morality and justice, and it was the pharaoh's responsibility to protect and promote these ideals. |
| | | |
| QUANTITATIVE FEATURES | Lexile® | 1070 |
| | Word Count | 1,514 |
| READER AND TASKS | Skill Lessons | Informational Text Elements, Central or Main Idea, Greek and Latin Affixes and Roots |
| | Close Read Prompt | <p>Compare and Contrast: In “Elena,” a woman strives to learn English in order to benefit her children, despite her family’s lack of support. Similarly, in <i>Hatshepsut: His Majesty, Herself</i>, a woman defies all odds and many years of tradition by becoming a pharaoh in Egypt to benefit her family and keep their royal lineage intact. Keeping these women in mind, respond to the following prompt: What central or main idea does the author of <i>Hatshepsut: His Majesty, Herself</i> convey about female empowerment? How does this idea compare and contrast with that of “Elena”? In your response, use evidence from the text to support your claim.</p> |
| BEYOND THE BOOK | Beyond the Book Activity | <p>Art: Hatshepsut’s Life & Reign</p> <p>Students will combine informal research with what they learned about Hatshepsut’s life and reign from the excerpt to design a piece of artwork that celebrates her life.</p> <p>Ask students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reread the passage noting key details about Hatshepsut’s life and reign. Conduct informal online research to find out more about her. Use what they learn about her to design a painting, drawing, or collage depicting her life and reign. Publish these pieces of artwork by posting them around the classroom or online. <p>Allow time for students to do a gallery walk to see each other’s artistic representations of Hatshepsut’s life and reign.</p> <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What did you learn about Hatshepsut’s life and reign from your research that was not in the passage? What did you notice about the artwork as you did the gallery walk? How did different students portray Hatshepsut? |
| | | |
| UNIT CONNECTION | Connect to Essential Question | <i>Hatshepsut: His Majesty, Herself</i> describes Egypt’s eighteenth dynasty in which a long pattern of male dominance was interrupted briefly when Hatshepsut, the widow of one pharaoh and the daughter of another, took the throne despite all odds |
| | Connect to Extended Writing Project | Students can use <i>Hatshepsut: His Majesty, Herself</i> as a mentor text for their Extended Writing Project. Depending on the subject they choose to research and write about, students may study the different text structures Catherine Andronik employs to present information and adopt or modify them for their own purposes. |

I, Too

| | | | | |
|-----------------------|--|--|--|--|
| AUTHOR | Name | Langston Hughes | | |
| | Gender | Male | | |
| QUALITATIVE FEATURES | Publication Date | 1925 | | |
| | Genre | Poetry | | |
| | Access Complex Text Features | <p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Langston Hughes is often considered the poet laureate of the Harlem Renaissance, a cultural movement that took place in New York City during the 1920s and 30s. The Harlem Renaissance gave rise to popular jazz as well as all kinds of African American art, literature, and poetry. <p>Connection of Ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some students may need help connecting the idea that the table in the poem is synonymous with the word “America” in the first line. Explain that this metaphor or comparison is intended to make the reader think about both references in new ways. <p>Genre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The features and structure of free-verse poetry may need to be defined or explained to students. Explain that the poem is considered a response to American poet Walt Whitman’s “I Hear America Singing.” | | |
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| QUANTITATIVE FEATURES | Lexile® | N/A | | |
| | Word Count | 62 | | |
| READER AND TASKS | Skill Lessons | Poetic Elements and Structure, Media | | |
| | Close Read Prompt | Literary Analysis: How does Langston Hughes use poetic elements and structure to explore the theme of change in his poem “I, Too”? Write a response in which you analyze the effect of the poem’s poetic structure. Did the effect change when you listened to the poem? Be sure to use evidence from the text to support your response. | | |
| BEYOND THE BOOK | Beyond the Book Activity | <p>Writing: Copy Change</p> <p>Copy Change is a way to use the structure of another poet’s work to create new poems with new meaning for ourselves. Ask students to use the structure of “I, Too” to compose a poem about their identity and how it has been shaped by America.</p> <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <p>I, too, _____</p> <p>I am the _____</p> <p>_____ send me to _____</p> <p>When _____ comes,</p> <p>But I _____,</p> <p>And _____,</p> <p>And _____.</p> <p>Tomorrow,</p> <p>I’ll be _____</p> <p>When _____ comes.</p> </td> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <p>Nobody’ll _____</p> <p>Say to me,</p> <p>“_____,”</p> <p>Then.</p> <p>Besides,</p> <p>They’ll see _____ I am</p> <p>And be _____</p> <p>I, too, am _____.</p> </td> </tr> </table> <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Which aspects of your identity helped to shape this poem? Do you like writing copy change poems, or do you prefer to write poems using your own structure? | <p>I, too, _____</p> <p>I am the _____</p> <p>_____ send me to _____</p> <p>When _____ comes,</p> <p>But I _____,</p> <p>And _____,</p> <p>And _____.</p> <p>Tomorrow,</p> <p>I’ll be _____</p> <p>When _____ comes.</p> | <p>Nobody’ll _____</p> <p>Say to me,</p> <p>“_____,”</p> <p>Then.</p> <p>Besides,</p> <p>They’ll see _____ I am</p> <p>And be _____</p> <p>I, too, am _____.</p> |
| | <p>I, too, _____</p> <p>I am the _____</p> <p>_____ send me to _____</p> <p>When _____ comes,</p> <p>But I _____,</p> <p>And _____,</p> <p>And _____.</p> <p>Tomorrow,</p> <p>I’ll be _____</p> <p>When _____ comes.</p> | <p>Nobody’ll _____</p> <p>Say to me,</p> <p>“_____,”</p> <p>Then.</p> <p>Besides,</p> <p>They’ll see _____ I am</p> <p>And be _____</p> <p>I, too, am _____.</p> | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| UNIT CONNECTION | Connect to Essential Question | What would you do to change a world in which people discriminate based on the color of your skin? In Langston Hughes’s inspirational poem, “I, Too,” the speaker raises his voice to protest African Americans’ exclusion from an America on the verge of change. | | |
| | Connect to Extended Writing Project | Students can use “I, Too” as a mentor text for their Extended Writing Project. They may adopt some of Langston Hughes’s methods for creating short, succinct sentences as they craft their informativel essays. | | |

Everybody Jump (from ‘What If’)

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| AUTHOR | Name | Randall Munroe |
| | Gender | Male |
| QUALITATIVE FEATURES | Publication Date | 2014 |
| | Genre | Informational |
| | Access Complex Text Features | <p>Genre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The selection contains text features, such as stick figure drawings, that are not common in informational text. Some students may struggle to connect these graphic features, particularly the area on the map and what it represents, to the text. <p>Connection of Ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The blend of humor—in particular humorous asides—with facts may make it difficult for students to synthesize information from the text. They may require assistance to determine the author’s purpose and message. <p>Specific Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Words such as <i>kinematics</i> may need clarification. Context clues or a dictionary can help students define unfamiliar words. |
| | | |
| QUANTITATIVE FEATURES | Lexile® | 860 |
| | Word Count | 626 |
| READER AND TASKS | Skill Lessons | Informational Text Structure, Technical Language |
| | Close Read Prompt | <p>Narrative: Randall Munroe describes the effect of everyone on Earth jumping at the same time as they stand close together. Imagine that you are one of these jumping individuals. Write a scene describing the incident from your point of view. What do you see? How do you maneuver yourself and others through the chaos? Draw inspiration for your narrative using evidence from the various informational text structures in Munroe’s essay as you write your narrative.</p> |
| BEYOND THE BOOK | Beyond the Book Activity | <p>Game: What If?</p> <p>Break students into teams to play “What if?” The object of the game is to use research skills and teamwork to correctly answer “what if” questions.</p> <p>Rules:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Once students are in small groups, ask each group to write 4 “what if” questions on four separate index cards. These will be your playing cards for the game. Each team will take a turn drawing a “what if” question from the pile. Then the rest of the teams will have 3 minutes to research the answer to the question and agree on an answer. Each group will share their answer to the question and the team that drew the card will select the answer they think is strongest. The team selecting the strongest answer can ask follow up questions about the credibility or accuracy of the information before selecting the winner for that round. The team to get to 5 first wins! |
| | | |
| UNIT CONNECTION | Connect to Essential Question | Imagine if everyone in the world gathered in the same place and jumped at exactly the same time! What would the aftermath be? Would planet Earth be affected? |
| | Connect to Extended Writing Project | Students can use “Everybody Jump” as a mentor text for their Extended Writing Project. They may adopt the author’s use of short sentences for emphasis in their informative essay. |

Hoot

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| AUTHOR | Name | Carl Hiaasen |
| | Gender | Male |
| QUALITATIVE FEATURES | Publication Date | 2002 |
| | Genre | Fiction |
| | Access Complex Text Features | <p>Genre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although it is an example of realistic fiction, the story contains some elements readers may perceive as fantasy. Students may need to attend to these elements to comprehend the text. Discuss with students why Roy questions whether he really sees the mysterious boy. <p>Sentence Structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The author's use of dashes and ellipses to denote pauses and continuing action may need explanation. Remind readers to pause for two beats when they reach such punctuation. |
| | | <p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students may not be familiar with the state of Montana in the northwestern part of the U.S.. Cowboys play an important role in the state, where ranching and farming are key to the economy. |
| QUANTITATIVE FEATURES | Lexile® | 990 |
| | Word Count | 672 |
| READER AND TASKS | Skill Lessons | Theme |
| | Close Read Prompt | Literary Analysis: In <i>Hoot</i> , Roy responds to bullying in a surprising way. How does the author use details and Roy's response to Dana's bullying to communicate a theme? Do you agree or disagree with the author's message in this story? Use evidence from the text to support your response. |
| BEYOND THE BOOK | Beyond the Book Activity | <p>Writing: An Onlooker Story</p> <p>Tell students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At the end of the excerpt from <i>Hoot</i>, the narrator says, "Roy wondered if any of the other kids on the bus had seen what he'd seen. For a moment he wondered if he'd really seen it himself." Imagine you are one of the other kids on the bus. Describe the events that took place from their perspective. Write what you say in the form of a journal entry, using first-person point of view. <p>Have students consider the following questions as they write their entries:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did you see Dana bully Roy, or were you too distracted by the mysterious boy? Did you see something Roy didn't? Have you seen Dana bully other people? Did something else take place on the bus that day that only you noticed? |
| | | |
| UNIT CONNECTION | Connect to Essential Question | Roy becomes the new kid in town when his family moves to Florida from Montana. Before he has a chance to make friends, Roy has a run-in with the school bully, Dana Matherson. How can the new kid cope with a bully? |
| | Connect to Extended Writing Project | Students can use <i>Hoot</i> as a mentor text for their Extended Writing Project. They may adopt the author's use of sensory language and descriptive words within the format of their informational essay. |

Donna O'Meara: The Volcano Lady

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| AUTHOR | Name | McGraw Hill Education |
| | Gender | N/A |
| QUALITATIVE FEATURES | Publication Date | 2017 |
| | Genre | Informational |
| | Access Complex Text Features | <p>Genre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The text contains features of a biography by relating the sequential story of a person's life. Through vivid descriptions of dangerous encounters with volcanoes, the text has the qualities of an adventure story. <p>Purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The primary purpose of the text is to inform, but it also includes a focus on how one woman's dream was realized. There are entertaining elements in the opening narrative as well. <p>Organization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> After beginning with an exciting narrative, the text backtracks in time to relate biographical information interspersed with scientific facts about volcanoes, which may be confusing for some students. |
| | | |
| QUANTITATIVE FEATURES | Lexile® | 940 |
| | Word Count | 673 |
| READER AND TASKS | Skill Lessons | N/A |
| | Close Read Prompt | <p>Personal Response: Donna O'Meara and her husband Steve risk their lives to collect close-up photos of volcanoes from around the world. If you were a scientist or researcher, what kind of natural phenomenon would you want to explore? Why? Support your response with evidence from the text and from your personal experience. As you make connections between Donna O'Meara's dream and your own, include any information that may have changed your understanding or opinion of what it means to be a scientist or researcher.</p> |
| BEYOND THE BOOK | Beyond the Book Activity | <p>Research Project: Active Volcanoes Around the World</p> <p>Donna O'Meara spent the night on the edge of an active volcano. To better understand active volcanoes, students will research active volcanoes in different parts of the world and present their findings to the class.</p> <p>Break students into groups and ask each group to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Select an active volcano to research Where is this volcano? When was the last time it erupted? Do people live near this volcano who could be in danger if it erupted? When do scientists predict this volcano might erupt? How do they know? What is happening inside this active volcano? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a photo collage combining photography and information about their active volcano. Present their photo collage to the class. <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the most surprising fact you learned about volcanoes from this project? After researching active volcanoes, can you imagine spending the night sleeping on the edge of one or living near a volcano? |
| | | |
| UNIT CONNECTION | Connect to Essential Question | <p>"Donna O'Meara: The Volcano Lady," the story of a woman who frequently puts herself in many precarious situations at the tops of volcanoes around the world, is paired with "Dare to be Creative!" and "Margaret Bourke-White: Fearless Photographer" so that students may compare and contrast motivated individuals within the informational genre.</p> |
| | Connect to Extended Writing Project | <p>Students can incorporate a similar structure to the article, "Donna O'Meara: The Volcano Lady" for their informative essays. Have students note how the author uses chronological text structure interspersed with scientific facts to organize her writing.</p> |

Dare to be Creative!

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| AUTHOR | Name | Madeleine L'Engle |
| | Gender | Female |
| QUALITATIVE FEATURES | Publication Date | 1983 |
| | Genre | Informational |
| | Access Complex Text Features | <p>Genre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The text is a speech that contains features of a personal essay, including references to real people and real events, real memories, experiences, and influences, all from a first-person point of view. <p>Purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The primary purpose of the text is to inform. The author shares how she came to develop her belief in the power of independent thought, free of the need to conform and unafraid of other people's judgment. <p>Organization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The text uses a combination of text structures. The author uses a cause-and-effect text structure to relate how her experiences influenced her belief. She also uses specific examples from history in order to further convey her belief. |
| | | |
| QUANTITATIVE FEATURES | Lexile® | 1110 |
| | Word Count | 533 |
| READER AND TASKS | Skill Lessons | N/A |
| | Close Read Prompt | <p>Personal Response: In the speech “Dare to be Creative!”, Madeleine L'Engle urges listeners to not be scared of thinking independently. Write about a time when you took a risk to do something creative or unexpected and it turned out well. Then, explain how this connects to the speech. Support your response with evidence from the text as well as personal experience.</p> |
| BEYOND THE BOOK | Beyond the Book Activity | <p>Writing: Motivational Speech</p> <p>Madeleine L'Engle's speech intends to motivate us to be more independent-minded. Write your own speech that encourages others to do something that you find to be important.</p> <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How did your own writing allow you to better understand the elements of influential speeches? What insights have you gained about genre and reader expectations based on writing your own speech? |
| | | |
| UNIT CONNECTION | Connect to Essential Question | Focusing on the theme of what motivates individuals, Madeleine L'Engle's speech “Dare to be Creative!” urges readers to make their own opinions and to ask questions that will help them “shake their universe.” |
| | Connect to Extended Writing Project | Students can find inspiration from Madeleine L'Engle's historical references within her speech. Have them work to research historical references that could be used in an informative writing assignment. |

Margaret Bourke-White: Fearless Photographer

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| AUTHOR | Name | McGraw Hill Education |
| | Gender | N/A |
| QUALITATIVE FEATURES | Publication Date | 2017 |
| | Genre | Informational |
| | Access Complex Text Features | <p>Purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An author may write for one or several purposes: to persuade, to inform, to describe, to explain, or to entertain, for example. While the purpose of informing is generally clear in a biography, other purposes may not be as clear for some readers. Lead students to discuss and support other possible purposes. <p>Sentence Structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some sentences are lengthy and utilize time transition words and phrases to indicate the span of Margaret Bourke-White's career. Point out such transitions, including dates, historical events, and words such as <i>after</i>, <i>during</i>, and <i>through</i>. |
| | | <p>Specific Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some terms such as <i>photojournalism</i> may need clarification. Students may define such terms using print or digital resources, context, and word origin. |
| QUANTITATIVE FEATURES | Lexile® | 1110 |
| | Word Count | 533 |
| READER AND TASKS | Skill Lessons | Synthesizing, Textual Evidence, Technical Language |
| | Close Read Prompt | <p>Compare and Contrast: “Donna O’Meara: The Volcano Lady,” “Dare to Be Creative!,” and “Margaret Bourke-White: Fearless Photographer” each describe a person motivated to do something other people see as impossible. They refuse to be manipulated into one way of thinking or living. Some people are motivated by role models or successes, while other people derive motivation from their experiences. Compare and contrast the main motivation of each individual in these three texts, using technical language when possible. Remember to use evidence from all three texts to support your ideas.</p> |
| BEYOND THE BOOK | Beyond the Book Activity | <p>Photojournalism: Current Event</p> <p>Margaret Bourke-White was the first woman to enter the field of photojournalism. To better understand this field, students will need to become photojournalists to tell the story of a current event or issue on campus.</p> <p>Ask students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Select a current issue or event they are interested in and want to report on. Use their devices to take photos of images that tell the story of this event. Post their images online with short captions. <p>Once everyone has posted their photos and simple captions online, allow the class to do an online gallery walk to view each other’s images.</p> <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Which events or issues were covered by multiple students? Why do you think so many students selected these events or issues? Which images were most effective at telling a story? What do you think made these images so effective? |
| | | |
| UNIT CONNECTION | Connect to Essential Question | From the time she started making photographs and recognized that they could stir people’s feelings to the culmination of her long record-breaking career as a photojournalist, Margaret Bourke-White’s perseverance and adventurous attitude paved the way for women to take on roles beyond what society expected of them. |
| | Connect to Extended Writing Project | Students can use “Margaret Bourke-White: Fearless Photographer” as a mentor text for their Extended Writing Project. They may adopt the author’s use of chronological text structure in their informative essay. |

TEXT COMPLEXITY

UNIT 4: PERSONAL BEST

Unit Title: Personal Best

Essential Question: Which qualities of character matter most?

Genre Focus: Argumentative Text

Overview

In sports, the phrase “personal best” refers to an athlete’s greatest achievement—the fastest race, the highest jump, the perfect score. For most of us, however, “personal best” refers to those moments when we act in a noble or just way. They are moments when we can feel proud of ourselves for having done the right thing—like standing up for our principles or sticking up for people in need.

What qualities of character do people need in order to achieve their personal best? Must one make sacrifices or face big challenges in order to reach it? Once a personal best is attained, does that moment define a person for the rest of his or her life? When people become known for their personal best, how does fame affect them and their character?

This unit offers a mixture of texts about real individuals and fictional characters who achieve their personal best through wrestling with familiar and realistic struggles. Real-life personal bests are recounted in the autobiography *I Am Malala* by Malala Yousafzai. Authors share their perspectives on the qualities of empathy, understanding, and righteousness in “Bullying in Schools,” *Freedom Walkers*, and “Celebrities as Heroes.” In the stories “All Summer in a Day” and “Priscilla and the Wimps,” characters are forced by unusual circumstances to stand up for what’s right.

After reading these stories and informational texts about individuals and characters that strive for their personal best, students will have the opportunity to write a literary analysis essay. In their essays, students will identify two unit texts that they think develop a main idea or theme that communicates the qualities of character that matter most.

Text Complexity

In Grade 6 Unit 4 students will continue reading texts with a genre emphasis on argumentative nonfiction. Throughout this unit students will be reminded of earlier skills, by reading two fiction excerpts and a poem, while also improving their ability to analyze several argumentative and informational texts. The selections in this unit fall in a Lexile band of 780-1120, with most texts residing in the 800-960 range. Many of the texts in this unit will introduce students to new modes of writing structures, particularly the various ways authors construct arguments. The featured sentence structures, text features, content and relationships among ideas make these selections accessible to sixth graders,

encouraging them to think more broadly as learners by engaging with texts of varying difficulty.

Unit 4 begins with two texts focusing on an inspiring young person, Malala Yousafzai, that will introduce students to the theme of the unit: Personal Best. Students may or may not be familiar with this figure and could benefit from a discussion about Middle East politics and religion before reading. The first text, an excerpt from *I Am Malala: The Girl Who Stood Up for Education and Was Shot by the Taliban*, is at an approachable 840L. Some students may struggle with the required prior knowledge and idiomatic expressions, but skills lessons in connotation and denotation and author's purpose and point of view, and a StudySync TV episode, will aid students in overcoming these challenges. The second text, "Malala Yousafzai - Nobel Lecture," is a higher Lexile text but is also topically and thematically relevant to the unit's other texts. Students will further develop informative writing analysis skills by completing a lesson on informational text structure, media, and arguments and claims, which also may help students understand that this text is meant to be spoken.

Two texts have been selected for Comparison Within and Across Genres: "Priscilla and the Wimps," and "All Summer in a Day." These texts both cover themes of bullying and fall on the lower end of the Lexile range. At the end of reading both selections, students will have completed a skills lesson that should equip them to compare and contrast the narrative point of view in each text to illustrate important themes about bullying. At 1050L, the point/counterpoint text "Bullying in Schools" will be students' first foray into a traditional argumentative text. Thankfully, the text is about a topic on which nearly every student will have something to say. The progression of reasoning and evidence throughout the text may be difficult for some readers to follow. This is offset by lessons in reasons and evidence, as well as arguments and claims that will allow students to establish the necessary skills for analyzing an argumentative text.

For the purposes of Comparison Within and Across Genres we have grouped *Freedom Walkers: The Story of the Montgomery Bus Boycott*, "Letter to Xavier High School" and *Freedom's Daughters: The Unsung Heroines of the Civil Rights Movement from 1830 to 1970*. These texts are linked by the shared topic of schools and offer an opportunity for a larger discussion about equal access to education. After reading these informational texts, students should be able to answer questions on the arguments about power each author makes and how these arguments similar and different. Difficulties with sentence structure, specific vocabulary, and connection of ideas are mitigated by lessons on central or main idea and comparing and contrasting informational texts. In addition to being in the middle range of difficulty for the unit, they reinforce the unit's theme of individual's personal best.

Students are given another opportunity to hone their argumentative text analysis skills when they read the unit's highest Lexile text, "Celebrities as Heroes." Also in point/counterpoint style, students will be asked to complete lessons on reasons and evidence, as well as arguments and claims alongside the text to further facilitate access to its more complex components. The poem "Famous" asks students to further consider the themes of the previous text and to complete a lesson on poetic elements and structure. Accessing these texts of varying difficulty will equip students with the abilities they need to succeed throughout the rest of the year.

English Language Learner Resources

Lessons in the English Language Learner Resources section offer explicit instruction. These lessons share a thematic and genre focus with all other lessons in the Core ELA unit.

The twenty ELL Resources are developed around two texts, “A Story of the South” and “Who’s the Real Hero?,” and an Extended Oral Project. Each text is written at four distinct levels. For ELLs, these texts serve as structural and thematic models of authentic texts in the Integrated Reading and Writing section of the unit. Thus, teachers may use the ELL texts in place of or as extensions for *Freedom Walkers: The Story of the Montgomery Bus Boycott* and “Celebrities as Heroes.”

ELL lessons modify the routines used with texts in the Integrated Reading and Writing section. Explicit vocabulary instruction is emphasized, and reading and writing Skills lessons focus strongly on language acquisition and reading comprehension.

After reading texts about important qualities of character, students will complete an Extended Oral Project that can be used in place of or as an extension to the Extended Writing Project. In this unit, students will plan and develop their own arguments for renaming a school after a local hero in the form of a debate.

I Am Malala: The Girl Who Stood Up for Education and Was Shot by the Taliban

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| AUTHOR | Name | Malala Yousafzai |
| | Gender | Female |
| QUALITATIVE FEATURES | Publication Date | 2013 |
| | Genre | Informational |
| | Access Complex Text Features | <p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The events take place in Northern Pakistan while under the rule of Taliban extremists. In 2009, the author was featured in a documentary film. Explain that the Taliban is a violent political group that believes in a strict interpretation of Islamic law, including rigid gender roles for women. |
| | | <p>Genre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Authors write for a variety of reasons: to inform, to persuade, to entertain, to describe, and to explain. Authors may write for more than one purpose. Encourage students to identify text evidence to support these purposes for the text: to inform and to persuade. |
| | | <p>Specific Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idioms are expressions that have meanings separate from the meanings of the individual words. Discuss with students the meanings of the following idioms: <i>chasing the money</i> and <i>don't you think she is meant for the skies?</i> |
| QUANTITATIVE FEATURES | Lexile® | 840 |
| | Word Count | 1,340 |
| READER AND TASKS | Skill Lessons | Setting a Purpose for Reading, Author's Purpose and Point of View, Connotation and Denotation |
| | Close Read Prompt | Argumentative: What message is Malala trying to convey about the media? According to the author, did it help or injure her, or both? In your response, cite specific examples of Malala's word choice that help the reader understand how she views the media. |
| BEYOND THE BOOK | Beyond the Book Activity | <p>Activity: Take a Stand</p> <p>Malala believes education is a universal human right worth fighting for. Students will select an issue that matters to them and take a stand.</p> <p>Ask students to think about the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What social issue or government mandate angers you? If you could change things, what would <i>you</i> do? What communication medium do you think is most effective for taking a stand on important issues? <p>After students have had time to consider and discuss the questions above, ask them to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decide on a pseudonym for themselves. Select a medium they want to use to take a stand. Record a radio show, TV interview, or podcast or write a blog or journal entry to raise awareness about this issue. <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you follow the news and what is happening in the world? If so, how do you normally respond when you hear about something happening in this country or around the world that you disagree with? Is social and/or political activism important to you? Why or why not? |
| | | |
| UNIT CONNECTION | Connect to Essential Question | Is getting an education worth risking your life? In this autobiography, Malala Yousafzai recalls how the Taliban mandated the closure of girls' schools in Northern Pakistan. Eleven-year-old Malala and her family faced many dangers in their fight for the right to education. |
| | Connect to Extended Writing Project | Students can use <i>I Am Malala</i> as a mentor text for their Extended Writing Project. They may adopt some of Malala's persuasive techniques and the manner in which she supports her opinions as they craft their proposals. |

Malala Yousafzai - Nobel Lecture

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| AUTHOR | Name | Malala Yousafzai |
| | Gender | Female |
| QUALITATIVE FEATURES | Publication Date | 2013 |
| | Genre | Informational |
| | Access Complex Text Features | <p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Malala delivers her speech to the Nobel Committee. Provide students with some background knowledge regarding this organization and its purpose. <p>Connection of Ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Malala refers to Islam and the Quran in her speech. Make sure students understand that Islam is a religion based on the worship of one God known as Allah. The Quran, believed to be a revelation from God, is the central text. The prophet Muhammad is recognized as God's messenger. <p>Sentence Structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Point out that the text is meant to be spoken and often uses sound devices such as repetition to create emphasis and a dramatic rhythm. Remind students this speech was written by a young girl whose native language is not English, and contains some inadvertent errors. |
| | | |
| QUANTITATIVE FEATURES | Lexile® | 960 |
| | Word Count | 2,226 |
| READER AND TASKS | Skill Lessons | Informational Text Structure, Media, Arguments and Claims |
| | Close Read Prompt | <p>Argumentative: Near the end of her speech, Malala gives a call to action. She says, "Dear sisters and brothers, dear fellow children, we must work . . . not wait. Not just the politicians and the world leaders, we all need to contribute. Me. You. We. It is our duty." Malala uses a combination of informational text structures in the course of her speech to communicate the idea contained in this call to action. Which do you think is the most effective, and why? Write a response using specific examples from the text and the video to support your claims.</p> |
| BEYOND THE BOOK | Beyond the Book Activity | <p>Writing: Dystopian Story</p> <p>Malala's description of the transformation in Swat after the Taliban takeover is reminiscent of a dystopian story. Students will write their own dystopian short stories to understand how the changes in Swat impacted Malala.</p> <p>Ask students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Imagine a destructive and powerful force entered their community taking control of schools, government offices, and businesses. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who or what is this destructive force? Why do they take over the community? What changes do they make to schools, government offices, and businesses? How does this destructive force use fear and coercion to control people? Write a dystopian short story that describes this group, their impact on the community, and how the people react. Include a hero or heroine who stands up against the forces changing the town. <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have you read dystopian stories? If so, how did those stories impact your writing process? Why is dystopian literature so popular? What does its popularity reveal about society and people's concerns about government? |
| | | |
| UNIT CONNECTION | Connect to Essential Question | Can one young woman change the world? Malala Yousafzai was the youngest person ever to receive the Nobel Peace Prize in 2014. In this speech, she summarizes her mission to promote universal education and to fight the forces that promote childhood poverty, child labor, and terrorist bullying. |
| | Connect to Extended Writing Project | Students may find inspiration for the Extended Writing Project in Malala Yousafzai's Nobel Prize speech, her perseverance in light of overwhelming obstacles, and how fighting for what matters to her helps to build her character. |

Priscilla and the Wimps

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| AUTHOR | Name | Richard Peck |
| | Gender | Male |
| QUALITATIVE FEATURES | Publication Date | 1984 |
| | Genre | Fiction |
| | Access Complex Text Features | <p>Genre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Though this short story is fiction, it includes many elements of a tall tale. Students should note and discuss the purpose of the author’s use of exaggeration. <p>Organization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The narrative is developed through flashback. Make sure students note clue phrases at the beginning of the story, such as “Listen, there was a time when.” <p>Specific Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The author uses hyperbole, or exaggeration, to create humor. Point out and discuss the purpose of examples such as “there were a few cases of advanced malnutrition among the newer kids.” |
| | | |
| QUANTITATIVE FEATURES | Lexile® | 780 |
| | Word Count | 1,074 |
| READER AND TASKS | Skill Lessons | N/A |
| | Close Read Prompt | <p>Personal Response: Write about a time that you have seen someone stand up to a bully or a threat, similar to the way Priscilla confronts Monk and the Kobras. In your response, compare the situation, the confrontation, and the result after the bully or threat was challenged.</p> |
| BEYOND THE BOOK | Beyond the Book Activity | <p>Writing: The Fallout</p> <p>“Priscilla and the Wimps” ends without telling the reader what happens to Priscilla, Melvin, Monk, and Klutter’s Kobras when they return to school.</p> <p>Ask students to select either Monk or Priscilla’s point of view and write a follow up to this short story from his or her perspective.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What happens after Priscilla locks Monk in her locker? How does he get out? How do the Kobras react? What is Priscilla or Monk thinking, feeling, and planning for the day school resumes? When school resumes, how do the students respond to this change in the power structure at school? <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why would the author end the story at this moment? Why did you choose to retell the story from either Monk or Priscilla’s point of view? What did you find most interesting about his or her perspective? |
| | | |
| UNIT CONNECTION | Connect to Essential Question | In “Priscilla and the Wimps,” Monk Klutter and his band of bullies terrorize an elementary school until one day they go too far. When they torment Priscilla’s only friend, Melvin, she takes matters into her own hands. |
| | Connect to Extended Writing Project | Students may find inspiration for the Extended Writing Project in Richard Peck’s story as they explore how the main character’s actions contribute to a character-building initiative for all the students at her middle school. |

All Summer in a Day

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| AUTHOR | Name | Ray Bradbury |
| | Gender | Male |
| QUALITATIVE FEATURES | Publication Date | 1954 |
| | Genre | Fiction |
| | Access Complex Text Features | <p>Connection of Ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although many science fiction stories take place on other worlds, they often comment on our own existing world. Spend time considering the importance of the sun and how it affects the behavior of the characters. <p>Sentence Structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bradbury’s dialogue often lacks speaker attributions. Explain that the voices heard in the dialogue at the beginning of the story belong to impatient school children asking questions about the sun. <p>Specific Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bradbury’s text is rich in figurative language; his words are not always used literally. Discuss the comparisons in the story. For example, in what way is the jungle on Venus like “a nest of octopi” or a “mattress”? |
| | | |
| QUANTITATIVE FEATURES | Lexile® | 870 |
| | Word Count | 1,938 |
| READER AND TASKS | Skill Lessons | Point of View, Theme, Media |
| | Close Read Prompt | Compare and Contrast: Compare and contrast the points of view in “Priscilla and the Wimps” and “All Summer in a Day.” Explain how the point of view in each text illustrates important themes about bullying. In your response, be sure to cite evidence from both texts. |
| BEYOND THE BOOK | Beyond the Book Activity | <p>Advertisement: Venus Awaits!</p> <p>In the short story “All Summer in a Day,” people have moved to Venus from Earth even though it rains all of the time and sun only comes out once every seven years. Students will need to design an advertisement designed to get people to relocate to Venus.</p> <p>Put students in groups for this creative activity. Then ask students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss the following questions in their groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why would humans want to leave Earth to live on Venus? What are they trying to escape? What does Venus offer? Once they have clear answers to these questions, students will need to choose a creative medium for their advertisement (e.g. commercial, print advertisement, online advertisement). Create a compelling advertisement to lure people from Earth to relocate on Venus. <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why did your group select your creative medium? Why did you think this type of advertisement would be most compelling or effective? |
| | | |
| UNIT CONNECTION | Connect to Essential Question | The story “All Summer in a Day” is set on the planet Venus, where the sun appears for only a few hours every seven years. They are suspicious of the tales Margot tells about the sunlight she remembers seeing on Earth. As the children await the sun’s arrival, they grow jealous and mean. What is the worst thing that they could do to Margot on the one day the sun will shine? |
| | Connect to Extended Writing Project | Students may find inspiration for the Extended Writing Project in Ray Bradbury’s unusual short story as they determine the unexpected ways a character can develop empathy and demonstrate his or her own “personal best.” |

Bullying in Schools

| | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|--|
| AUTHOR | Name | StudySync |
| | Gender | N/A |
| QUALITATIVE FEATURES | Publication Date | 2014 |
| | Genre | Argumentative |
| | Access Complex Text Features | <p>Connection of Ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To determine the claims made for each argument, students must first identify the central idea. In nonfiction writing, text features such as headings may help students determine claims. <p>Specific Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Genre To evaluate the effectiveness of each argument, students will need to assess the evidence. Lead students to differentiate between primary and secondary sources of evidence. <p>Specific Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Domain-specific words such as <i>administrators</i> and <i>school districts</i> may need defining. Context clues or a dictionary can help students define unfamiliar words. |
| QUANTITATIVE FEATURES | Lexile® | 1050 |
| | Word Count | 1,683 |
| READER AND TASKS | Skill Lessons | Evaluating Details, Arguments and Claims, Reasons and Evidence, Word Patterns and Relationships |
| | Close Read Prompt | <p>Debate: Which of the two arguments do you consider to be more persuasive? As you prepare for your debate, use the graphic organizer to consider how the arguments develop and if you think their claims will convince the readers. After choosing a position, justify your claims by citing reasons and evidence from the text in the debate with your classmates. After your debate, you will write a reflection in the space below.</p> |
| BEYOND THE BOOK | Beyond the Book Activity | <p>Infographic: Raise Awareness</p> <p>Bullying in schools and online is a complicated issue. Select one of the topics below and design an infographic to raise awareness at your school and in your community about this issue.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts of bullying Rates of bullying Tips to help adults spot the signs that bullying is happening Strategies students can use to protect themselves Resources in place for victims of bullying <p>Infographics should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creative title Concise language Credible information Clear point Citations <p>Use http://stopbullying.gov as a resource.</p> <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you think bullying is a problem at our school? If so, what do you think should be done to stop bullying? Do you think online bullying is as serious as traditional forms of bullying? Why or why not? |
| | UNIT CONNECTION | <p>Connect to Essential Question</p> <p>The authors of the persuasive essay “Bullying in Schools” believe that bullying is a serious problem, but they disagree about whether schools are doing enough to face the challenge. One author claims that schools need to work harder. The other says that schools are doing an effective job. Who is right?</p> <p>Connect to Extended Writing Project</p> <p>Students can use “Bullying in Schools” as a mentor text for their Extended Writing Project. They may adopt some of the Point/Counterpoint methods for defending an argument as they craft their own argument.</p> |

Freedom Walkers: The Story of the Montgomery Bus Boycott

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| AUTHOR | Name | Russell Freedman |
| | Gender | Male |
| QUALITATIVE FEATURES | Publication Date | 2006 |
| | Genre | Informational |
| | Access Complex Text Features | <p>Genre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The story is narrative nonfiction. Make sure students do not confuse it with realistic fiction by comparing and contrasting genre elements such as the inclusion of real people and actual events. <p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The events take place in 1950s America during a time of strict racial segregation. Review with students historical background information on the Jim Crow laws, segregation in the South, and the birth of the civil rights movement. <p>Specific Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Domain-specific vocabulary such as <i>constitutional rights</i> may need to be explained. Students may consult print or digital resources, as well as examining context to determine word meanings. |
| | | |
| QUANTITATIVE FEATURES | Lexile® | 930 |
| | Word Count | 1,389 |
| READER AND TASKS | Skill Lessons | N/A |
| | Close Read Prompt | Personal Response: Referring to the story of Claudette Colvin, and to your own experience, write a speech about courage. Before you write, think about the following questions: What motivates courage? How is it driven by emotion? How is courage influenced by one's values and strong beliefs? How is it driven by conditions in our society? |
| BEYOND THE BOOK | Beyond the Book Activity | <p>Perform: Rights vs. Norms</p> <p>Even though Claudette Colvin knew it was her civil right to stay in her seat, social “norms” demanded that she give her seat to a white passenger. Put students in small groups and ask them to construct and perform a scene that explores the difference between a legal right and a social norm.</p> <p>Ask them to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brainstorm scenarios in which an adult demands that a teenager do something. The scenario should explore the difference between the teen’s legal rights and the man’s expectations based on social norms. Write a scene that brings this scenario to life. This scene should make it clear that the teenager knows his or her legal rights but doubts their relevance in this situation.. Assign roles to each group member. Rehearse. Perform. <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What did these scenes have in common? What do these scenes reveal about how teenagers are treated by adults? |
| | | |
| UNIT CONNECTION | Connect to Essential Question | <i>Freedom Walkers: The Story of the Montgomery Bus Boycott</i> introduces one of the most famous events of the civil rights movement by telling the story of Rosa Park’s predecessor, Claudette Colvin. Similarly, the story of a brave young woman in <i>Freedom’s Daughters: The Unsung Heroines of the Civil Rights Movement from 1830 to 1970</i> provides the reader with information about the civil rights movement and speaks to which qualities of character matter most. These texts, along with “Letter to Xavier High School,” are thematically linked. |
| | Connect to Extended Writing Project | Students can use <i>Freedom Walkers</i> as a mentor text for their Extended Writing Project. They may adopt some of Freedman’s methods for crafting a compare and contrast text structure as they create their proposals. |

Letter to Xavier High School

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| AUTHOR | Name | Kurt Vonnegut |
| | Gender | Male |
| QUALITATIVE FEATURES | Publication Date | 2013 |
| | Genre | Informational |
| | Access Complex Text Features | <p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kurt Vonnegut was an American writer. In a career spanning over 50 years, Vonnegut published 14 novels, three short story collections, five plays, and five works of non-fiction. He is most famous for his darkly satirical, best-selling novel <i>Slaughterhouse-Five (1969)</i> <p>Specific Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Certain terms, such as <i>geezer</i> (old and eccentric) and <i>to wit</i> (that is to say; namely) may need to be defined for students. In addition, the use of <i>sic</i> in brackets may need to be explained. <p>Connection of Ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Certain terms may need to be explained in order for students to synthesize information in the letter. For example, the phrase “no fair tennis without a net” refers to Vonnegut’s stipulation that the poem he is asking students to write must rhyme, or in other words, follow certain rules. |
| | | |
| QUANTITATIVE FEATURES | Lexile® | 950 |
| | Word Count | 286 |
| READER AND TASKS | Skill Lessons | N/A |
| | Close Read Prompt | <p>Personal Response: Vonnegut claims that any creative pursuit, whether as a hobby or career, has a significant and positive impact on a person’s life. In your opinion, do you think schools today do enough to nurture and promote creativity? Support your response with evidence from the text as well as your own experiences.</p> |
| BEYOND THE BOOK | Beyond the Book Activity | <p>Art: A Journey Inward</p> <p>In his letter, Kurt Vonnegut encourages students to “do art.” Students will select a form of artistic expression and practice creating something, at the same time reflecting on what they learn about themselves throughout the process.</p> <p>Ask students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Select a type of art they want to try (e.g., visual, performance, music). Encourage them to explore this type of art online. They should read blogs and watch videos to learn more about the process of creating this kind of art. Create something. Reflect on what you learned about yourself from the process of making art. Share what they worked on with the class. <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why did you select this type of art? What part of this assignment did you struggle with most—selecting the kind of artistic expression you wanted to pursue, creating the work, or reflecting on your process and what you learned about yourself? |
| | | |
| UNIT CONNECTION | Connect to Essential Question | Just before his death, Kurt Vonnegut wrote a letter to the students at Xavier High School, encouraging them to write poems—and then destroy them—in order to learn about the value of art and maybe discover themselves in the process. |
| | Connect to Extended Writing Project | Students can find inspiration for their research essays from Kurt Vonnegut’s letter to the students at Xavier High School. Have them analyze the letter to identify what sections of the text they would use as a direct quote to support an article on the importance of creativity. |

Freedom's Daughters: The Unsung Heroines of the Civil Rights Movement

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| AUTHOR | Name | Lynne Olson |
| | Gender | Female |
| QUALITATIVE FEATURES | Publication Date | 2001 |
| | Genre | Non-fiction |
| | Access Complex Text Features | <p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The historical text is set in Farmville, Virginia during the Civil Rights Movement, and students may be unfamiliar with some historical references. Explain that during the 1950s communities were segregated, which barred African Americans from many businesses and created an unfair and unjust society. <p>Connection of Ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The historical text focuses on heroines throughout the Civil Rights Movement. Discussing why women like Barbara Johns are the focus of this text may be helpful for students to understand the plight of women, and especially African American women, during the Civil Rights Movement. Students may find it helpful to compare Barbara Johns to other influential African Americans who peacefully fought for equal rights, such as Rosa Parks and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. <p>Specific Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difficult vocabulary, such as <i>docility</i> (mild or calm attitude; obedience) and <i>antagonistic</i> (taking an opposing stand toward someone; hostile), may need defining. Remind students to use context clues while reading, and also to use a dictionary to define unfamiliar words. |
| | | |
| QUANTITATIVE FEATURES | Lexile® | TK |
| | Word Count | 975 |
| READER AND TASKS | Skill Lessons | Central or Main Idea, Compare and Contrast |
| | Close Read Prompt | <p>Compare and Contrast: In <i>Freedom Walkers: The Story of the Montgomery Bus Boycott</i>, fifteen-year-old Claudette Colvin refused to give up her seat on a bus. By staying seated, she stood up for the rights of all African Americans. In <i>Freedom's Daughters: The Unsung Heroines of the Civil Rights Movement from 1830 to 1970</i>, another teenager, Barbara Johns, noticed the unfair school conditions for African Americans and organized a strike until her school was in better condition. Compare and contrast the main ideas of these two texts, noting how the authors presented events in the civil rights movement. Be sure to use evidence from both texts in your response.</p> |
| BEYOND THE BOOK | Beyond the Book Activity | <p>Speech: Your Call to Action in 60 Seconds</p> <p>In her historical recount, Lynn Olson highlights Barbara Johns's call to action. Challenge students to write and deliver an elevator speech—a brief speech that outlines or pitches an idea in the time it takes to travel in an elevator—about the call to action they want to create.</p> <p>Ask students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Think about a problem or issue that plagues the world today. Prepare a 60-second elevator speech that clearly and concisely articulates the issue at hand and present a potential solution. Practice their elevator speeches with a partner. Present for the class. <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was it challenging to identify an important issue? Why do people wish to solve this issue? How might solving this issue make our world a better place? |
| | | |
| UNIT CONNECTION | Connect to Essential Question | Barbara Johns, a high school student in Farmville, Virginia, notices discrimination in the form of her run-down school in <i>Freedom's Daughters: The Unsung Heroines of the Civil Rights Movement from 1830 to 1970</i> . Since the adults in her town weren't willing to stand up and fight for equality, she lead a group of African American students to make a great change, and in the process, made history. |
| | Connect to Extended Writing Project | Students can find inspiration from <i>Freedom's Daughters</i> when writing their literary analyses. Have them reflect on Lynne Olson's characterization of Barbara and the arguments she makes. |

Celebrities as Heroes

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|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| AUTHOR | Name | StudySync |
| | Gender | N/A |
| QUALITATIVE FEATURES | Publication Date | 2015 |
| | Genre | Argumentative |
| | Access Complex Text Features | <p>Connection of Ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The authors structure their arguments by using evidence, analysis, conjecture, and rhetorical strategies like hyperbole. Help students identify claims asking, <i>What is this author's opinion of celebrities as heroes?</i> and citing textual evidence. <p>Genre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> These arguments fall into the genre of expository nonfiction. Help students differentiate between primary and secondary sources offered as evidence to support claims. <p>Specific Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Words such as <i>flamboyant</i> and <i>perseverance</i>, as well as terms such as <i>sociologically preprogrammed</i>, may need defining. Context clues in the text or print or digital resources can help students define some unfamiliar words. |
| | | |
| QUANTITATIVE FEATURES | Lexile® | 1120 |
| | Word Count | 1,313 |
| READER AND TASKS | Skill Lessons | Arguments and Claims, Reasons and Evidence |
| | Close Read Prompt | Argumentative: Which of the two arguments is less persuasive? In your response, include an analysis of the arguments, claims, reasons, and evidence the author uses in the argument you feel is less persuasive. Explain why you cannot commit to that argument by citing textual evidence from both texts to support your opinion. |
| BEYOND THE BOOK | Beyond the Book Activity | <p>Writing: Celebrity and Hero</p> <p>Students will research and write about a celebrity who they feel <i>is</i> a true hero.</p> <p>Ask students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Choose a celebrity they believe is a “true hero.” Research their chosen celebrity. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What cause has this celebrity fought for or dedicated time to? How has this person served as a positive role model for others? How has this celebrity demonstrated strength, honesty, courage, and perseverance? Write an argumentative paragraph with a clear claim, strong evidence, and thorough analysis that makes a clear argument for why this celebrity qualifies as a hero. <p>Once every student has written an argumentative paragraph, pair students and ask them to read each other's paragraphs and discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did the argument convince them that this celebrity should be considered a hero? Why or why not? How compelling was their evidence? Did it clearly state how the person demonstrated strength, honesty, courage, and perseverance? |
| | | |
| UNIT CONNECTION | Connect to Essential Question | Celebrities are often considered to be heroes in American society, but should they be? The authors of this article disagree on the issue. One argues that most celebrities have not done enough to be called heroic. The other claims that some celebrities' achievements qualify them to be heroes. |
| | Connect to Extended Writing Project | Students can use “Celebrities as Heroes” as a mentor text for their Extended Writing Project. They may adopt some of the Point/Counterpoint methods for defending an argument as they craft their own arguments. |

Famous

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|
| AUTHOR | Name | Naomi Shihab Nye |
| | Gender | Female |
| QUALITATIVE FEATURES | Publication Date | 1995 |
| | Genre | Poetry |
| | Access Complex Text Features | <p>Connection of Ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The poem defines <i>being famous</i> through a series of analogies. Make sure students understand the speaker’s alternative definition of being famous: being important. |
| | | <p>Genre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The poem is written in free verse, which some students may have trouble recognizing. Point out that Nye adheres to the poetic form by dividing her poem into lines and stanzas. The first line of each stanza tells readers about the item and to whom or what it is famous. <p>Purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The author’s intention for writing may be ambiguous. Suggest that students think about their own concept of fame, and then compare it to the everyday, ordinary things Nye writes about. |
| QUANTITATIVE FEATURES | Lexile® | N/A |
| | Word Count | 158 |
| READER AND TASKS | Skill Lessons | Poetic Elements and Structure |
| | Close Read Prompt | Literary Analysis: In her poem, Naomi Shihab Nye shakes up most people’s ideas about what it means to be famous. Fame isn’t about celebrity; it’s about what’s important. How does Nye’s use of poetic elements and structure contribute to this theme? Be sure to cite evidence from the poem in your response. |
| BEYOND THE BOOK | Beyond the Book Activity | <p>Writing: Acrostic Poem</p> <p>Naomi Nye redefines the word “famous” in her poem. Students will explore Nye’s definition of the word by writing an acrostic poem.</p> <p>Ask students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Write an acrostic poem using the letters of the word “famous” to explore Nye’s definition of the word “famous.” The lines of the poem can be written in a relaxed, conversational tone like Nye’s. Transform the first letter into an image that helps bring the meaning of each line to life. Share these poems with the class or publish them online. <p>F A M O U S</p> <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why do you think Nye focuses on the word “famous” in her poem? How does her definition impact the way you think about this word? |
| | UNIT CONNECTION | Connect to Essential Question |
| Connect to Extended Writing Project | | Students may find inspiration in Nye’s use of poetic elements and structure as they craft their proposal for the Extended Writing Project. |

TEXT COMPLEXITY

UNIT 5: MAKING YOUR MARK

Unit Title: Making Your Mark

Essential Question: What’s Your Story?

Genre Focus: Drama

Overview

Most young people feel as if they are expected to make a mark on the world. Teens especially experience the pressure of living up to the high standards set by their teachers, parents, and other mentors. Yet every young person also faces doubts and challenges as he or she hurtles towards adulthood.

How does one “make a mark” on the world? Act like a model child? Be the best in the class? Is being a loyal friend or thoughtful person enough to make a mark? What if you make a mark by behaving badly? Does that count?

These are some of the questions your students will explore in this Grade 6 unit, which offers an assortment of fiction, drama, and nonfiction texts about individuals and characters who strive to make a mark on the world despite serious obstacles. In *The Story of My Life* (Chapter IV), Helen Keller, blind and deaf since infancy, tells about the moment she overcame her physical handicaps to connect to the world. Melba Pattillo Beals reveals in her autobiography *Warriors Don’t Cry* how she and eight other African-American students were expected to make a mark when they were sent to integrate a high school in Arkansas during the civil rights era. In the drama *Damon and Pythias* and the short story “Amigo Brothers,” friends who are as close as brothers put their lives and friendships at risk as they stay true to their principles and their dreams.

After reading these stories, dramas, and nonfiction texts about individuals and characters who strive to make their mark, students will have the opportunity to write and deliver an extended oral presentation. For this project, students will use the elements of storytelling to share a personal story about a singular moment or experience that changed their lives.

Text Complexity

Grade 6 Unit 5 continues sixth grade students’ development as readers and writers. The genre focus of this unit is drama; however, students will also read poems, several fiction selections, and a handful of informational texts as well. With a Lexile range of 820-1130, the majority of the texts in this unit fall between 820L and 890L, a comfortable level of difficulty for most sixth graders. Additionally, the vocabulary, sentence structures, text features, content and relationships among ideas make these texts accessible to sixth graders, enabling them to grow as readers by

interacting with such appropriately challenging texts.

To access the first text in the unit, *Warriors Don't Cry*, students will need prior knowledge of the Civil Rights movement. Students will read this text alongside a skill lesson in informational text structure. To tie in the theme of individuals making their mark, we have also included several fiction selections, such as “Amigo Brothers,” “Listen Slowly,” and “Charles.” The back-and-forth sentence structure in “Amigo Brothers” may confuse some students, and they may lack prior knowledge about some boxing terms, but a skill lesson in character’s internal and external responses to the plot should help them through. “Listen Slowly” is on the lower end of the Lexile range and is narrated in a somewhat sarcastic tone of voice. Students’ completion of a skill lesson on voice should help them understand this nuanced character-building technique. A lesson in point of view should help students through any challenges they may have while reading “Charles.”

The first dramatic text in this unit is *Damon and Pythias*. Students may struggle with the style of narration in this text, as well as some of the stage directions, but will work through a skill lesson on plot to access the text. “Saying Yes” and “The All-American Slurp” are grouped together for Comparing Within and Across Genres. Each of these selections feature characters navigating cultural differences in the United States. Students will compare the two texts and consider how each text’s setting work to influence the characters and plot. “Saying Yes” is a seemingly simple poem in which students may struggle discerning between different speakers. “The All-American Slurp” is a mid-Lexile selection that is read alongside a lesson in which students analyze how setting influences plot and character development.

For the purposes of Comparing Within and Across Genre, and because the topic is of great cultural significance, we have grouped Langston Hughes’ poem “Helen Keller,” a chapter from Helen Keller’s autobiography *The Story of My Life*, and a scene from the play *The Miracle Worker*. Accessing these works require prior knowledge about disability in the early twentieth century and the cultural significance of Helen Keller. Through reading these selections and completing the accompanying skills lessons, students will compare Keller’s approach to conflict across the three selections. “Helen Keller” is an accessible place to start the unit. *The Story of My Life* is the highest Lexile text in the unit but is accompanied by a StudySyncTV episode. *The Miracle Worker* will be students’ final encounter with drama in the unit and they may find navigating the various dramatic elements and structure in the text difficult. A StudySyncTV episode and a skill lesson in dramatic elements and structure will help students overcome any challenges they may have with this dramatic text. By accessing these diverse texts, students will be able to see how authors show an individual making their mark.

English Language Learner Resources

Lessons in the English Language Learner Resources section offer explicit instruction. These lessons share a thematic and genre focus with all other lessons in the Core ELA unit.

The twenty ELL Resources are developed around two texts, “Stage Sets Through History” and “Six Too Many,” and an Extended Oral Project. Each text is written at four distinct levels. For ELLs, these texts serve as structural and thematic models of authentic texts in the Integrated Reading and Writing section of the unit. Thus, teachers may use the ELL texts in place of or as extensions for *The Miracle Worker*, *Damon and Pythias*, and “The All-American Slurp.”

ELL lessons modify the routines used with texts in the Integrated Reading and Writing section. Explicit vocabulary instruction is emphasized, and reading and writing Skills lessons focus strongly on language acquisition and reading comprehension.

After reading texts about backgrounds and core beliefs, students will complete an Extended Oral Project that can be used in place of or as an extension to the Extended Writing Project. In this unit, students will reflect on an important personal decision as they plan and present a soliloquy.

Warriors Don't Cry

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| AUTHOR | Name | Melba Pattillo Beals |
| | Gender | Male |
| QUALITATIVE FEATURES | Publication Date | 1994 |
| | Genre | Informational |
| | Access Complex Text Features | <p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The events take place in Little Rock, Arkansas in 1957. To build prior knowledge, students may need to review the civil rights movement, the function of the national guard, and the heightened racial tensions of the time period. <p>Purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The author compares and contrasts her point of view regarding events with the points of view she perceives in others. To determine Beals's purpose for writing, advise students to carefully examine the author's word choice and focus. <p>Specific Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Words associated with the U.S. military such as <i>convoy</i> and <i>caravan</i> may need defining. Context clues in the text or a print or digital dictionary can help students define unfamiliar words. |
| | | |
| QUANTITATIVE FEATURES | Lexile® | 890 |
| | Word Count | 989 |
| READER AND TASKS | Skill Lessons | Monitoring Comprehension, Informational Text Structure, Word Patterns and Relationships |
| | Close Read Prompt | <p>Informative: Identify the author's message in the excerpt and describe how the use of a sequential text structure helps her develop that message effectively. Then choose two or three paragraphs from the text and explain the essential role that each one plays in the development of ideas in the text. What information does each paragraph contribute to the order of events that Beals describes in her story? Be sure to support your ideas with textual evidence.</p> |
| BEYOND THE BOOK | Beyond the Book Activity | <p>Text Message: My First Day</p> <p>Students will imagine that the Little Rock Nine had access to modern technology and create a text message conversation between one of the Nine and a friend at an all-black high school. The conversation should provide readers with insights into what that first day at Little Rock Central High might have been like.</p> <p>Ask students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research the Little Rock Nine and select the person they want to focus on. Write a series of text messages from this person's perspective to a friend attending his/her old school. Reveal the events of that first day and how they felt. Students should use the information they learned researching this person. Include emojis and/or gifs to add depth to their text messages. <p>Put students into small groups. Ask them to share their text messages, select their favorite, and explain to the class why they feel that conversation was the strongest.</p> |
| | | |
| UNIT CONNECTION | Connect to Essential Question | What if the simple act of going to school were a life-or-death battle? Melba Pattillo Beals tells the story of her struggle to survive as one of nine African American students sent to integrate the all-white Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1954. |
| | Connect to Extended Writing Project | Students can use <i>Warriors Don't Cry</i> as a mentor text for their Extended Oral Project. They may choose to use a sequential structure as an organizational pattern for their presentation. |

Damon and Pythias

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| AUTHOR | Name | Fan Kissen |
| | Gender | Male |
| QUALITATIVE FEATURES | Publication Date | 1964 |
| | Genre | Fiction |
| | Access Complex Text Features | <p>Organization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although the text is a drama, it is not divided into traditional acts or scenes. Instead, the playwright uses short bars of music and sound effects that are noted in parentheses. These sounds indicate a change of scene. <p>Genre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The text is a drama with a narrator and three characters identified as First, Second, and Third Voice. The Voices are used as part of the narration to give context and arouse interest. At the end, the voices are speakers in a crowd scene. <p>Specific Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Words that have passed out of general usage such as <i>money bags</i> may need defining. Context clues in the text or a print or online dictionary can help students define unfamiliar words. |
| | | |
| QUANTITATIVE FEATURES | Lexile® | TK |
| | Word Count | 2,120 |
| READER AND TASKS | Skill Lessons | Plot, Greek and Latin Affixes and Roots |
| | Close Read Prompt | Literary Analysis: How do Damon and Pythias respond to conflict as the drama unfolds? Does their friendship ever waver? What do their responses to conflict reveal about their characters? Use evidence and relevant examples of dialogue from the text to support your answer. |
| BEYOND THE BOOK | Beyond the Book Activity | <p>Performance: The Sacrifice</p> <p>Put students into small groups and ask them to write a one-act play focused on the themes of friendship, risk, and sacrifice which takes place in a modern context. The goal of the one-act play is to mirror the issues at the center of Damon and Pythias but reflects an actual situation two friends might find themselves in today.</p> <p>Ask students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop two central characters. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who are they? How did they become friends? How are they similar to or different from one another? Decide on a setting. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> When and where will the play take place? Establish the conflict that drives this play. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who is in trouble? How does each friend react to the conflict? What choices will each person have to make? Write collaboratively on a shared document. Assign roles. Rehearse lines. Perform for the class |
| | | |
| UNIT CONNECTION | Connect to Essential Question | How much are people willing to risk for those they care about? Loyalty among friends is more precious than all the power and money in the world in this play based on the ancient Greek tale of <i>Damon and Pythias</i> . When Pythias is sentenced to death for questioning the laws of the king, Damon strikes a bargain that puts his life and friendship with Pythias at risk. |
| | Connect to Extended Writing Project | Students can use <i>Damon and Pythias</i> as a mentor text for their Extended Writing Project. They may draw inspiration for Fan Kissen's ideas about friendship and loyalty to help them describe something they believe, or explain a position they have taken. |

Amigo Brothers

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| AUTHOR | Name | Piri Thomas |
| | Gender | Male |
| QUALITATIVE FEATURES | Publication Date | 1978 |
| | Genre | Fiction |
| | Access Complex Text Features | <p>Connection of Ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> By midpoint in the story, the characters' actions and motivations are implied rather than stated directly. Point out that students must begin to make inferences to understand what the characters are doing and why. |
| | | <p>Sentence Structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The text describing the action in a boxing bout may be hard for some students to follow. Provide support for phrases such as "Antonio's pretty dancing." |
| QUANTITATIVE FEATURES | Lexile® | 890 |
| | Word Count | 3,474 |
| READER AND TASKS | Skill Lessons | Character |
| | Close Read Prompt | <p>Literary Analysis: What efforts do Antonio and Felix make to achieve their dreams? What do their efforts reveal about them? In what ways are Antonio and Felix similar to and different from each other? How do they change as the plot moves toward a resolution? Write a response to these questions, citing evidence from the text to support your claims.</p> |
| BEYOND THE BOOK | Beyond the Book Activity | <p>Recording: The Golden Gloves Tournament of Champions is...</p> <p>Students will pick up where the announcer left off in the story delivering a dramatic blow-by-blow account of the fight.</p> <p>Ask students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Imagine they are a sports announcer providing a detailed account of what is happening in this fight for a radio audience. Write a script that dramatizes the events of the fight from a sports announcer's point of view. Include details about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each boxer's physical build and fighting styles. Atmosphere at Tompkins Square Park Managers in each corner Audience and its reaction. Finish by declaring the winner. <p>Once they've written a script, students should record a dramatic reading of their script as though they are a sports announcer.</p> |
| UNIT CONNECTION | Connect to Essential Question | In the story "Amigo Brothers," two amateur boxers and best friends, Antonio and Felix, must fight each other to determine who will advance to the Golden Gloves Championship. The two friends face off in a fierce battle. Can they emerge from the fight with their friendship intact? |
| | Connect to Extended Writing Project | Students can use "Amigo Brothers" as a mentor text for their Extended Oral Project. They may adopt some of Piri Thomas's methods for revealing character traits as they craft their own narrative for presentation. |

Listen, Slowly

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| AUTHOR | Name | Thanh Hà Lai |
| | Gender | Female |
| QUALITATIVE FEATURES | Publication Date | 2015 |
| | Genre | Fiction |
| | Access Complex Text Features | <p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In flashback, part of the story is set during the Vietnam War. Explain to students that this war was a civil war between North and South Vietnam in which the United States provided South Vietnam with military support. <p>Organization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The author uses italic text to indicate that Bà is speaking in Vietnamese. This first instance of italic text is also in a flashback, with Bà telling her young granddaughter stories about how Bà met her grandfather. <p>Genre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The author uses sarcasm to reveal character and create humor. Point out examples such as, “Mosquitoes hunt from dusk to dawn, but I bet there are some who stretch the hours.” |
| | | |
| QUANTITATIVE FEATURES | Lexile® | 820 |
| | Word Count | 1,392 |
| READER AND TASKS | Skill Lessons | Visualizing, Language, Style, and Audience |
| | Close Read Prompt | Literary Analysis: How does the author use language to develop the audience’s understanding of Mai and Bà? What does their conversation in the excerpt say about them as individuals and as family members? Cite evidence from the text to support your response. |
| BEYOND THE BOOK | Beyond the Book Activity | <p>Interview: StoryCorp Inspired</p> <p>To learn more about their family’s history and culture, students will conduct a StoryCorps interview with a family member. The mission of StoryCorps is to “create a culture of listening” so the goal of this recorded conversation is for the student to ask questions and listen.</p> <p>Ask students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Select a family member they want to interview. Craft 15 questions they can use in this interview. The StoryCorps website has interview questions that students can use or adapt for their interviews. Decide which audio capture app or recording device they will use to record the conversation. Conduct the interview. Share their recording. <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why did you select this person to interview? What was the most surprising thing you learned about the person you interviewed? After completing this assignment, is there anyone else in your life you want to interview? |
| | | |
| UNIT CONNECTION | Connect to Essential Question | Can spending the summer in another country with your grandmother help you reconnect to your family roots? In this excerpt from <i>Listen, Slowly</i> , twelve-year-old Mai accompanies her grandmother Bà to Vietnam in an attempt to discover if her grandfather is still alive. During the trip, Bà reveals details about her past to her granddaughter that Mai never knew before. |
| | Connect to Extended Writing Project | Students can use “Listen, Slowly” as a mentor text for their Extended Writing Project. They may adopt Thanh Hà Lai’s use of flashback to help them describe something they believe, or explain a position they have taken. |

Charles

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| AUTHOR | Name | Shirley Jackson |
| | Gender | Female |
| QUALITATIVE FEATURES | Publication Date | 1948 |
| | Genre | Fiction |
| | Access Complex Text Features | <p>Organization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shirley Jackson uses foreshadowing to help readers determine that Charles is Laurie. At the story's end, ask if anyone guessed who Charles really was. Discuss clues that let them know, such as the way Laurie speaks to his father. <p>Connection of Ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jackson creates humor through dramatic irony, in which the audience knows or suspects information that the characters do not know. Laurie's mother avidly wants to meet Charles's mother, not suspecting that she herself is Charles's mother. <p>Sentence Structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unusual sentence structures typical of a child's speech may need explanation. An example is when Laurie tells his parents, "Charles was so fresh to the teacher's friend he wasn't <i>let</i> do exercises." |
| | | |
| QUANTITATIVE FEATURES | Lexile® | 700 |
| | Word Count | 1,596 |
| READER AND TASKS | Skill Lessons | Point of View |
| | Close Read Prompt | <p>Argumentative: At the end of "Charles," the reader and the narrator both learn that the title character is a person who is unknown to the teacher. This suggests that Laurie's mother, the narrator, has a limited point of view. Therefore, what exactly has been going on throughout Laurie's first weeks of kindergarten? What clues, if any, are presented that the narrator overlooks? Develop an argument in which you state what you think has actually happened in the story and whether you think that the narrator should have known all along that Laurie was lying to her.</p> |
| BEYOND THE BOOK | Beyond the Book Activity | <p>Writing: Charles is Real</p> <p>Shirley Jackson has written stories that deal with suspense and the supernatural. Students will imagine a scenario in which Laurie is not consciously inventing Charles but believes that Charles is an actual boy in his class.</p> <p>Ask students to write two separate scenes composed of dialogue between characters and encourage them to incorporate suspenseful elements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scene 1: A conversation between Laurie and his mother that takes place after the PTA meeting. In this scene, Laurie will make it clear that he believes Charles is real. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does Laurie's mom react to learning that her son believes Charles is a real person? What evidence does Laurie provide to prove that Charles is real? Scene 2: A conversation between Laurie's mom and dad as they struggle to decide what to do with Laurie. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What do they think is happening? What are they afraid of? What do they decide to do? |
| | | |
| UNIT CONNECTION | Connect to Essential Question | Throwing chalk, kicking a guest speaker, playing sinister psychological games, being banished to the classroom corner—it's just another day of kindergarten in "Charles," Shirley Jackson's classic story-with-a-twist. |
| | Connect to Extended Writing Project | Students can use "Charles" as a mentor text for their Extended Oral Project. They may adopt some of Shirley Jackson's methods for telling stories as they craft their own oral biographical narratives for presentation. |

Saying Yes

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|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| AUTHOR | Name | Diana Chang |
| | Gender | Female |
| QUALITATIVE FEATURES | Publication Date | 1974 |
| | Genre | Poetry |
| | Access Complex Text Features | <p>Connection of Ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making inferences and synthesizing information in the poem may be difficult for some students. • Clarify what the author means in lines such as “the homes I’ve had,” i.e., aspects of the two cultures she has experienced. |
| | | <p>Purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students may need help determining the poet’s purpose for writing. • Help students see that in the last two lines the poet reaffirms how much she values her multicultural heritage. <p>Organization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students may have trouble understanding that the first four stanzas of the poem are written as a conversation between two people. • In the concluding three stanzas, the speaker is talking to the reader directly. |
| QUANTITATIVE FEATURES | Lexile® | N/A |
| | Word Count | 45 |
| READER AND TASKS | Skill Lessons | N/A |
| | Close Read Prompt | <p>Poetry: Have you ever been asked a question about yourself that was impossible to give a yes or no answer to? Use Chang’s poem as a model for inspiration and write a lyrical conversation in Chang’s style. It can be autobiographical or entirely imagined. As in Chang’s poem, be sure to include lines of dialogue at the beginning and a concluding stance at the end that makes it clear what your poem’s speaker really wants to say. Title your poem either “Saying Yes” or “Saying No.”</p> |
| BEYOND THE BOOK | Beyond the Book Activity | <p>Art: Identity Explored</p> <p>Students will create a self-portrait using a medium of their choice to explore two different parts of their identity.</p> <p>Ask students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify two aspects of their identity they want to explore artistically. • Select an artistic medium. • Use images, color, and symbols to reveal these two sides of their identity. • Present their artwork to the class explaining their artistic choices and what they reveal about the two sides of their identity. <p>To reflect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are these two sides of your identity in conflict or do they complement one another? • How have these two sides of your identity been impacted by your culture, family, friends, faith, and education? |
| | | |
| UNIT CONNECTION | Connect to Essential Question | <p>For the Chinese-American speaker of the poem “Saying Yes,” there is no clear border between being Chinese and American.</p> <p>This selection features characters navigating cultural differences in the United States.</p> |
| | Connect to Extended Writing Project | <p>Students can use “Saying Yes” as a mentor text for their Extended Oral Project. They may draw inspiration from Diana Cheng’s use of repetition to emphasize an important point to support their overall stance or position.</p> |

The All-American Slurp

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| AUTHOR | Name | Lensey Namioka |
| | Gender | Female |
| QUALITATIVE FEATURES | Publication Date | 1987 |
| | Genre | Fiction |
| | Access Complex Text Features | <p>Organization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Point out that the author uses asterisks to divide individual episodes within the narrative. Each episode contributes to a unifying theme. <p>Connection of Ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students may need help synthesizing information throughout the text. For example, the author reveals character by showing the way each family member attempts to learn English. <p>Purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The author has more than one reason for writing the text. Point out the last three paragraphs and what they imply about the author's objectives for writing the story. |
| | | |
| QUANTITATIVE FEATURES | Lexile® | 870 |
| | Word Count | 3,286 |
| READER AND TASKS | Skill Lessons | Setting |
| | Close Read Prompt | <p>Discussion: “Saying Yes” and “The All-American Slurp” both feature distinct cultural settings. How does each text make use of Chinese and American cultures to influence the development of plot and character? Compare and contrast the relationships between setting, plot, and character in the two texts. Remember to support your ideas with evidence from the texts. In a discussion with your peers, use evidence from both texts as well as personal experience to respond to these questions.</p> |
| BEYOND THE BOOK | Beyond the Book Activity | <p>Performance: Cultural Norms and Food</p> <p>Put students into small groups to research the cultural norms around food in another country. They will use this information to create a comical scene in which an American traveler violates a particular norm.</p> <p>Ask each group to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Select a country. Research cultural norms around food and dining. Identify one cultural norm that is very different from the United States and explore it in depth. Use the information from their research to create a comical scene involving an American traveler. Assign each group member a role in the scene. Rehearse. Perform for the class. <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have you ever violated a cultural norm without meaning to? If so, where were you and what happened? How did other people respond? Beyond food, what are some of the cultural and social norms that exist in the United States that an immigrant new to this country might not know? |
| | | |
| UNIT CONNECTION | Connect to Essential Question | “The All-American Slurp” is Leslie Namioka’s humorous story about the struggle of an Asian family to assimilate into American life. The young, teenage girl who narrates the story feels uncomfortable and embarrassed as she and her family try urgently to fit into a new culture. |
| | Connect to Extended Writing Project | Students can use “The All-American Slurp” as a mentor text for their Extended Writing Project. They may adopt Lensey Namioka’s use of humor to help them describe something they believe, or explain a position they have taken. |

Helen Keller

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| AUTHOR | Name | Langston Hughes |
| | Gender | Male |
| QUALITATIVE FEATURES | Publication Date | 1931 |
| | Genre | Poetry |
| | Access Complex Text Features | <p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is the first of three selections students will read about Helen Keller. Background information on Keller’s life will help students understand the poet’s references to her struggle and the meaning of being “in the dark,” and enable a deeper understanding of all three texts. <p>Genre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The features and structure of free verse poetry may need to be defined and/or explained to students. Free verse follows the rhythms of natural speech by not using a consistent meter, rhyme scheme, or other patterns. <p>Specific Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Certain terms the poet uses, such as <i>dower</i> (or <i>dowry</i>: the gifts that a bride brings to her husband when they marry) may need to be defined. |
| | | |
| QUANTITATIVE FEATURES | Lexile® | N/A |
| | Word Count | 37 |
| READER AND TASKS | Skill Lessons | N/A |
| | Close Read Prompt | <p>Personal Response: The speaker of the poem says of Helen Keller that “She,/ Within herself,/ Found loveliness,/ Through the soul’s own mastery.” What does it mean to find something “within” yourself? When a person faces a challenge, why might it be necessary to turn inward rather than look for answers from other people or the outside world? In a personal response, record your conclusions. Include examples from the poem and your own prior experience to support your conclusions.</p> |
| BEYOND THE BOOK | Beyond the Book Activity | <p>Art: Inspired by Imagery</p> <p>Students will transform Langston Hughes’s poem “Helen Keller” into a piece of artwork using imagery from the poem to inspire their creation. Students can select the artistic medium of their choice: painting, sculpture, photography, collage, or drawing.</p> <p>Once students have completed their artwork, split the class in half. One half of the class should stand with their artwork to explain their artistic choices as the other half of the class does a gallery walk. Flip groups, so every student has the opportunity to field questions about their artwork and do a gallery walk.</p> <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Which specific words and phrases from Hughes’s poem were most inspirational as you worked on this art project? Despite the different artistic mediums used for this assignment, what similarities did you notice about the various pieces of artwork inspired by this poem? |
| | | |
| UNIT CONNECTION | Connect to Essential Question | <p>What would it be like to grow up in a world where you could neither see nor hear? In the poem “Helen Keller,” Langston Hughes imagines how Helen Keller experienced the world. These selections focus on the life story of Helen Keller. In Langston Hughes’ poem, students consider what it would be like to grow up in a world where they could neither see nor hear. Read alongside an autobiography and drama, students will have the chance to analyze the various ways we can tell someone’s life story.</p> |
| | Connect to Extended Writing Project | <p>Students can use “Helen Keller” as a mentor text for their Extended Writing Project. They may adopt Langston Hughes’s use of imagery to help them describe something they believe, or explain a position they have taken.</p> |

The Story of My Life (Chapter IV)

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| AUTHOR | Name | Helen Keller |
| | Gender | Female |
| QUALITATIVE FEATURES | Publication Date | 1903 |
| | Genre | Informational |
| | Access Complex Text Features | <p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help students build background knowledge by providing information about education for the blind. Laura Bridgman was the first blind and deaf person to be educated. In 1929, Perkins was the first school for the blind in the United States. <p>Genre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Point out that an autobiography follows certain conventions. Keller records her thoughts and feelings from the first-person point of view and often returns to childhood experiences. <p>Specific Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Certain nautical terms that Keller uses, such as <i>plummet</i> and <i>sounding-line</i>, may need to be defined. The Biblical reference to “Aaron’s rod” may also need explanation. Students may consult print or digital resources to determine meanings and understand references. |
| | | |
| QUANTITATIVE FEATURES | Lexile® | 1130 |
| | Word Count | 1,064 |
| READER AND TASKS | Skill Lessons | N/A |
| | Close Read Prompt | <p>Personal Response: When Keller realizes that the “finger play” in her palm actually signifies the water she’s feeling, she experiences an epiphany: everything has a name. Think about an important discovery you made as a child. Perhaps you learned the correct meaning of a word you misunderstood or found out that a growling dog may bite. In a personal response, compare and contrast your experience with Keller’s and draw conclusions about how learning can affect children.</p> |
| BEYOND THE BOOK | Beyond the Book Activity | <p>Art: My First Word</p> <p>Students will explore their first spoken word using art to reveal what that word means to them.</p> <p>Ask students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have a conversation with their parents about their first word. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How old were they when they said their first word? What was the context in which this first word was said? What was happening? Who was there? What was their parents’ reaction to this first spoken word? Use what they have learned in this conversation to inspire a piece of artwork that features this word but uses color, shapes, symbols, and images to show what this word means to the student on a deeper level. Display the artwork around the classroom and do a gallery walk. <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What did you learn during your conversation with your parents that you didn’t know before? What did you notice about the artwork as you did the gallery walk? What similarities and/or differences did you notice? |
| | | |
| UNIT CONNECTION | Connect to Essential Question | In this selection about Helen Keller, students will consider each texts’ approach to conflict. In an excerpt from her autobiography, <i>The Story of My Life</i> , Keller remembers the most important day of her life, when her teacher Annie Sullivan helped her understand that “everything has a name.” |
| | Connect to Extended Writing Project | Students can use <i>The Story of My Life</i> as a mentor text for their Extended Writing Project. Have them consider whether an experience they felt changed their lives had an effect on a position or stand they have taken. |

The Miracle Worker

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| AUTHOR | Name | William Gibson |
| | Gender | Male |
| QUALITATIVE FEATURES | Publication Date | 1956 |
| | Genre | Drama |
| | Access Complex Text Features | <p>Genre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Because the text is a drama and does not rely on narration, show students how to read a line of dialogue. This excerpt presents the play's conflict between Helen and Annie through dialogue and stage directions. <p>Sentence Structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The dialogue is a mixture of simple and complex sentences. At times, a character's line of dialogue is interrupted by another character or a stage direction. Following this fragmentation will be easier if students hear the dialogue read aloud. <p>Connection of Ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students will have to use dialogue and stage directions to make inferences about themes in the play. Students will also need to synthesize information about Helen Keller provided in the introduction. |
| | | |
| QUANTITATIVE FEATURES | Lexile® | N/A |
| | Word Count | 1,334 |
| READER AND TASKS | Skill Lessons | Dramatic Elements and Structure |
| | Close Read Prompt | Compare and Contrast: What is the conflict of the play and how is it resolved? Compare the conflict and resolution of the conflict in the play with those that are presented in "Helen Keller" by Langston Hughes and Keller's autobiography, <i>The Story of My Life</i> . Cite specific scenes or dialogue that contribute to the play's conflict and resolution to support your response. |
| BEYOND THE BOOK | Beyond the Book Activity | <p>Activity: Selecting a Soundtrack</p> <p>Students will analyze the action and mood of this scene, as well as the feelings it evokes, to select an appropriate musical soundtrack.</p> <p>Ask students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Break the scene into at least three sections. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where do transitions occur within the scene? Where do changes in the action or mood appear? What clues exist in the dialogue and stage directions that indicate there are changes taking place in this scene? Select music that matches each part of the scene. Write an explanation of why they selected each song or piece of music and analyze how it matches the character development, feeling, action, or mood. <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why is the musical score for a movie or play so important? How can music enhance or distract from the action in a play or movie? How did selecting music for this scene impact the way you think about it? |
| | | |
| UNIT CONNECTION | Connect to Essential Question | In an excerpt from the play <i>The Miracle Worker</i> , Helen Keller's teacher Annie Sullivan argues that young Helen, who is blind and deaf, is testing her family with her bad behavior. Sullivan warns that the girl will only grow and learn if she is held to higher standards. |
| | Connect to Extended Writing Project | Students can use <i>The Miracle Worker</i> as a mentor text for their Extended Writing Project. Have them consider whether they have ever taken a stance or position, as Anne Sullivan did in the play, that had a significant effect on someone else, just as Anne had on Helen Keller. |

TEXT COMPLEXITY

UNIT 6: TRUE TO YOURSELF

Unit Title: True to Yourself

Essential Question: Who are you meant to be?

Genre Focus: Realistic Fiction

Overview

Realistic fiction reflects modern life, and modern life is full of questions about who we are and what our place is in the world. In fact, many readers turn to realistic fiction in search of answers to some of life's many problems. By following the problems of characters in a novel or short story, or reading about real individuals and their search for their own truth, readers get a chance to explore options for themselves.

What does it mean to be true to yourself? How does a person find his or her true self? What do readers learn when they analyze fictional characters and real-life individuals who are searching for themselves? How does reading stories help readers figure out who they are themselves?

This unit offers a variety of literature and classic nonfiction texts about individuals and characters in search of their true selves. The biography *Eleanor Roosevelt: A Life of Discovery* reveals how Roosevelt discovered her strengths and her own identity as she carried out her duties as First Lady of the United States. In the poem "Rosa" by Rita Dove, the poet tries to get to the truest sense of a famous figure from the Civil Rights movement. In *Touching Spirit Bear* and *Brave*, young boys face serious obstacles as they proceed to discover who they are and who they want to be.

After reading these literary and nonfiction texts about individuals and characters in search of their truest selves, students will have the opportunity to write a research report, devise a research question in response to their reading, and find and take notes from reliable sources. They will then synthesize this information into a full-length essay that includes parenthetical citations and a Works Cited page.

Text Complexity

Grade 6 Unit 6 continues to challenge students to think and read critically by returning to a more fiction-centric genre focus. In this unit, students will read a poem, three works of fiction, and several informational texts. The Lexile range for this unit is 730-1110, with most texts falling between 940L and 1070L. The selections in this unit should be approachable for most sixth graders in length and difficulty. Additionally, the vocabulary, sentence structures, text features, content and relationships among ideas make these texts accessible to sixth graders, enabling them to grow as readers by interacting with such appropriately challenging texts.

The unit begins with Nikki Grimes’s realistic fiction novel *Bronx Masquerade*. Though written as a mix of prose and poetry with multiple narrators, at this point in the year, students should have little difficulty accessing this text. A skill lesson will help review summarizing. Students will later encounter a thematically related text, W.E.B. Du Bois’s “Letter to His Daughter.” This text may require a discussion before reading, as W.E.B. Du Bois has not yet been encountered this year. A skill lesson in figurative language will help students work through any difficulties with Du Bois’s use of metaphor throughout the text. Both of these texts are accessible points for the students thematic focus of being true to oneself.

For the purposes of Comparing Within and Across Genres we have selected “A BEACON of Hope: The Story of Hannah Herbst” and “Shree Bose: Never Too Young to Change the World”. Both texts share the same topic: young women who saw a problem and set out to find a solution. Students may find the scientific and medical vocabulary used in both texts challenging. They may also find the many info-graphics in “Shree Bose” hard to comprehend. Skill lessons on word meaning and media should help make synthesis of these texts easier.

For the purposes of Comparing Within and Across Genre, we are grouped three texts that all provide information on the iconic Civil Rights movement figure Rosa Parks. Students read the nonfiction text “The Story Behind the Bus” to build context on Parks’s historic bus ride. While the Lexile of this text is the highest of the trio, the background knowledge they have from texts in previous units related to the Civil Rights movement should make this text accessible. They then read the poem “Rosa” by Rita Dove, which presents the moment when Parks refused to give up her seat on the bus in a succinct and compelling handful of lines. Students then read an excerpt from *Rosa Parks: My Story*, Parks’s autobiography. These lessons give students the chance to practice comparing and contrasting, as well as honing their ability to understand and identify informational text elements.

We have also grouped *Eleanor Roosevelt: A Life of Discovery* and *Brave* for the purposes of Comparing Within and Across Genres. *Eleanor Roosevelt: A Life of Discovery* is the highest Lexile text in the unit and may challenge students with its use of flashback, but students will have encountered similar biographical texts earlier in the year that should help with this difficulty. *Brave* is a graphic novel. It’s mid level Lexile and themes will help students compare it with the Roosevelt text. This final group gives students the opportunity to apply the comparative thinking and writing skills they learned earlier in the unit to more complex texts from different genres.

Additionally, students will read a variety of genres in the same Lexile band and theme throughout the unit. *Touching Spirit Bear* may challenge the a little more than other texts in the units. *I Never Had it Made*, Jackie Robinson’s autobiography, will be made most accessible after a discussion about race and sports in the early twentieth century. The shared thematic and genre link provides students with consistent access and reference points for the texts. Combined with the similar level of text difficulty, students can focus on applying the skills to these texts without drastic fluctuations in reader difficulty.

English Language Learner Resources

Lessons in the English Language Learner Resources section offer explicit instruction. These lessons share a thematic and genre focus with all other lessons in the Core ELA unit.

The twenty ELL Resources are developed around two texts, “Middle School Loneliness” and “Shakespeare in

Harlem,” and an Extended Oral Project. Each text is written at four distinct levels. For ELLs, these texts serve as structural and thematic models of authentic texts in the Integrated Reading and Writing section of the unit. Thus, teachers may use the ELL texts in place of or as extensions for “Rosa,” “W.E.B. DuBois Letter to His Daughter,” or *I Never Had it Made*.

ELL lessons modify the routines used with texts in the Integrated Reading and Writing section. Explicit vocabulary instruction is emphasized, and reading and writing Skills lessons focus strongly on language acquisition and reading comprehension.

After reading texts about identity, students will complete an Extended Oral Project that can be used in place of or as an extension to the Extended Writing Project. In this unit, students will plan and present an oral report about an influential figure.

Bronx Masquerade

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| AUTHOR | Name | Nikki Grimes |
| | Gender | Female |
| QUALITATIVE FEATURES | Publication Date | 2002 |
| | Genre | Fiction |
| | Access Complex Text Features | <p>Sentence Structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain that the story is told from the point of view of two young adults. They narrate their experience in the same high school from unique perspectives. Point out that both characters use a conversational tone in their narration. |
| | | <p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain that each narrator's story also contains a poem. The two characters, Devon and Janelle, each prepare a poem for an <i>open mike</i>. <i>Open mic nights</i> are generally held in a public space where amateur performers can practice their works of comedy, poetry, music, etc. |
| QUANTITATIVE FEATURES | Lexile® | 680 |
| | Word Count | 1,266 |
| READER AND TASKS | Skill Lessons | Generating Questions, Summarizing |
| | Close Read Prompt | <p>Discussion: In <i>Bronx Masquerade</i>, Devon and Janelle are ready for their classmates to know who they truly are. Do you think that Devon and Janelle would be accepted for who they really are by their peers? Do you think they could help each other? Why or why not? Summarize Devon and Janelle's experiences with each other and their peers to plan for a debate. Use evidence from the text to support your position.</p> |
| BEYOND THE BOOK | Beyond the Book Activity | <p>A Self-Portrait</p> <p>In Nikki Grime's novel, she writes narratives from teens' perspectives about how they deal with social pressures and tackle their true selves. Ask students to create a self-portrait designed to explore their own complex identities. Encourage them to think about and include images that reveal how their identities have been impacted by the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trauma and challenges Peer pressure Social status Gender Belief systems <p>Students can choose to draw the self portrait by hand or use original photography and/ or artwork with music to design a dynamic film exploring their individual identity.</p> <p>Once students have completed their self portraits, they can share them with the class or post them online.</p> |
| | | |
| UNIT CONNECTION | Connect to Essential Question | <p>Why do we hide our true selves? How can we find the courage to show others who we really are? In Nikki Grimes's novel <i>Bronx Masquerade</i>, we meet two teenagers growing up in the Bronx. They each have just begun to express their true selves through poetry in their English class. While they have not fully let go of the masks that they where for their peers, they may be able to be their true selves with one another.</p> |
| | Connect to Extended Writing Project | <p>Students can use <i>Bronx Masquerade</i> by Nikki Grimes as a mentor text for their Extended Writing Project. Even though the project is research-based, Grimes's use of figurative language and conversational tone can provide inspiration to students on how such a text can engage readers with the use of vivid language.</p> |

A BEACON of Hope: The Story of Hannah Herbst

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| AUTHOR | Name | Rebecca Harrington |
| | Gender | Female |
| QUALITATIVE FEATURES | Publication Date | 2015 |
| | Genre | Informational |
| | Access Complex Text Features | <p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The article references the participant's experience in the Discovery Education 3M Young Scientist Challenge. The Discovery Education 3M Young Scientist Challenge is a competition for students in grade 5-8 to come up with a solution to an everyday problem. <p>Specific Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difficult vocabulary, such as <i>crisis</i> (a time of intense difficulty, trouble, or danger) and <i>probe</i> (a scientific instrument used to examine an issue and help collect data), may need defining. Remind students to use context clues while reading, and also to use a dictionary to define unfamiliar words. |
| QUANTITATIVE FEATURES | Lexile® | 1290 |
| | Word Count | 393 |
| READER AND TASKS | Skill Lessons | N/A |
| | Close Read Prompt | <p>Personal Response: “A BEACON of Hope: The Story of Hannah Herbst” describes a teen’s invention that can help power an entire nation. If you were to create an invention to help a nation in need, what would it be? Why? Support your response with evidence from the article as well as personal experience. As you make connections between Hannah’s life and your own, include anything that may have impacted your ideas about your potential invention.</p> |
| BEYOND THE BOOK | Beyond the Book Activity | <p>In the article “A BEACON of Hope: The Story of Hannah Herbst,” Hannah Herbst creates a unique invention that helps provide energy to a foreign country. Students will need to design an advertisement about an invention that they think would help another country in need.</p> <p>Put students in groups for this creative activity. Then ask students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss the following questions in their groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What type of invention would help another country? Why? What do you need to do to create it? What effect does this have on the other nation involved? Once they have clear answers to these questions, they will need to choose a creative medium for their advertisement (e.g. commercial, print advertisement, online advertisement). Create a compelling advertisement that explains their helpful invention. <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why did your group select your creative medium? Why did you think this type of advertisement would be most compelling or effective? |
| UNIT CONNECTION | Connect to Essential Question | Can you discover yourself through helping others? Each of these selections feature young women who manage to create amazing things at a young age. In comparing these two texts, students will gain information about what it takes to be an innovator. Hannah Herbst was just a regular 14 year old, until her pen-pal in Ethiopia helped inspire her to create an amazing invention to help struggling communities get sustainable energy sources. |
| | Connect to Extended Writing Project | Students can find inspiration from Hannah Herbst for their research project. Have students consider doing more research on countries with limited access to energy sources or on sustainable energy sources. |

Shree Bose: Never Too Young to Change the World

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| AUTHOR | Name | Amanda Sperber |
| | Gender | Female |
| QUALITATIVE FEATURES | Publication Date | 2017 |
| | Genre | Informational |
| | Access Complex Text Features | <p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students may not be familiar with information regarding cancer research in the text. Explain that some patients develop a resistance to cancer treatment drugs, which allows for the continued growth of cancer cells even with treatment. <p>Organization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The author does not follow a linear timeline in telling about Shree Bose's life. Help students place the events of Shree Bose's life in a sequence graphic organizer to help them keep track of events in the order in which they occur. <p>Specific Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Terms such as "chemotherapy drug cisplatin" and "ovarian cancer" may need defining. Context clues in the text or print or digital resources can help define unfamiliar terms. |
| | | |
| QUANTITATIVE FEATURES | Lexile® | 1040 |
| | Word Count | 1,654 |
| READER AND TASKS | Skill Lessons | Synthesizing, Media, Word Meaning |
| | Close Read Prompt | <p>Informative: What qualities make a great problem-solver? You read that Hannah Herbst set out to solve the global energy crisis to help her pen pal in Ethiopia. How does Shree Bose find solutions to scientific and everyday problems encountered throughout her life? How does the author's use of information presented in different media or formats as well as in words help illustrate Shree's scientific approach to finding solutions? Use evidence from both the text and charts, visuals, or other quantitative information to support your ideas.</p> |
| BEYOND THE BOOK | Beyond the Book Activity | <p>Journalism: Young People Making a Difference</p> <p>There are young people all over the world tackling complex issues and challenges. Ask students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Find a young person who is making a difference in the world. Research that person to find out more about him/her. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What sparked their interest in this field? Did they have a mentor? What challenges did they encounter? How did they overcome these challenges? What recognition did they received for their work? Use the information discovered during the research phase of this assignment to write an article about the young person they selected. <p>Once students have written their articles, the class can create a website dedicated to celebrating the successes of young people all over the world and post their articles online.</p> |
| | | |
| UNIT CONNECTION | Connect to Essential Question | What inspired a teenage girl to become a cancer researcher? At age 15, as her grandfather battled cancer, Shree Bose realized that she had to help find a cure for the disease. Her research on cancer drugs won the Google Science Fair. That accomplishment gave her the platform to help get more girls and women involved in STEM fields. |
| | Connect to Extended Writing Project | Students can use "Shree Bose" as a mentor text for their Extended Writing Project. They may adopt the author's use of using direct quotes or media features such as charts, images, or maps in their informative essay. |

Letter to His Daughter

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| AUTHOR | Name | W.E.B. Du Bois |
| | Gender | Male |
| QUALITATIVE FEATURES | Publication Date | 1914 |
| | Genre | Informational |
| | Access Complex Text Features | <p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> W.E.B. DuBois was the first African American to graduate from Harvard University. His daughter Yolande went on to become an educator and an activist. She married Harvard-educated poet Countee Cullen in 1928, with Langston Hughes in attendance. <p>Purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The purpose of a letter is more complicated than simply to inform, entertain, or persuade. For example, students may need to be reminded that the author is writing to a close personal relative with advice rather than with persuasive techniques. <p>Specific Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some students may require assistance with Du Bois’s use of metaphor. Lead students to identify the comparisons in lines such as “Take the cold bath bravely” or “Enter into the spirit of the big bed-room.” |
| | | |
| QUANTITATIVE FEATURES | Lexile® | 730 |
| | Word Count | 356 |
| READER AND TASKS | Skill Lessons | Figurative Language, Context Clues |
| | Close Read Prompt | Literary Analysis: In his letter to his daughter, W.E.B. Du Bois often uses figurative language, which allows readers to know more about him. What do his metaphors tell us about who he is and how he thinks people should live? Which of his values or beliefs are evident in his letter? Be sure to include evidence from the text in your response. |
| BEYOND THE BOOK | Beyond the Book Activity | <p>Writing: A Parent’s Advice</p> <p>In W.E.B. Du Bois’ letter, he gives his daughter advice about how to handle herself as a student far from home.</p> <p>Ask students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Imagine they are preparing to leave home to attend a college far away. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What fears might their parents have? What advice would they want to give them? What memories might they bring up? Write a letter from one of their parent’s point of view to their future selves in college. Encourage them to capture their parent’s tone and style in the letter using specific words and phrases. Share their letters with their parent to see what changes or additions their parents would make to the letter. <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What was your parent’s reaction to your letter? How accurate did they think your letter was? What did they want to add or change? |
| | | |
| UNIT CONNECTION | Connect to Essential Question | W.E.B. Du Bois writes an inspiring letter to his teenage daughter, who is living and studying abroad. In the letter, Du Bois send words of caution to her about the strange and wonderful things she might encounter in this new place, and imparts his own practical advice about how to meet the challenges ahead. |
| | Connect to Extended Writing Project | Students can use “Letter to His Daughter,” by W.E.B. Du Bois, as a mentor text for their Extended Writing Project. Even though the project is research-based, Du Bois’s use of metaphors and idioms can provide inspiration to students on how a somewhat formal, informational text can still be enlivened by the use of figurative language. |

The Story Behind the Bus

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| AUTHOR | Name | The Henry Ford® |
| | Gender | Male |
| QUALITATIVE FEATURES | Publication Date | 2002 |
| | Genre | Non-Fiction |
| | Access Complex Text Features | <p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For much of the 20th century, city buses in the South were segregated, meaning that blacks and whites had separate seats. Blacks were required to sit behind whites, and give up their seat if a white passenger did not have seat. |
| | | <p>Specific Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difficult vocabulary, such as <i>inequities</i> (instances of injustice or unfairness) and <i>integrated</i> (made open or accessible to everyone on an equal basis), may need defining. Remind students to use context clues while reading, and also to use a dictionary to define unfamiliar words. |
| QUANTITATIVE FEATURES | Lexile® | 1140 |
| | Word Count | 790 |
| READER AND TASKS | Skill Lessons | N/A |
| | Close Read Prompt | <p>Personal Response: When have you calmly or peacefully stood up for something that is important to you or that you believe in? Write about this experience after reflecting on the information in “The Story Behind the Bus.” Before you begin, ask yourself, “How did Rosa Parks demonstrate her belief?” Support your response with evidence from the text as well as personal experience.</p> |
| BEYOND THE BOOK | Beyond the Book Activity | <p>Activity: Take a Stand</p> <p>Rosa Parks peacefully protested bus segregation. Students will select an issue that matters to them and take a stand.</p> <p>Ask students to think about the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What social issue or school rule angers you? If you could change things, what would <i>you</i> do? What communication medium do you think is most effective for taking a stand on important issues? <p>After students have had time to consider and discuss the questions above, ask them to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decide on a pseudonym for themselves. Select a medium they want to use to take a stand. Record a radio show, TV interview, or podcast or write a blog or journal entry to raise awareness about this issue. <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you follow the news and what is happening in the world? If so, how do you normally respond when you hear about something happening in this country or around the world that you disagree with? Is social and/or political activism important to you? Why or why not? |
| | | |
| UNIT CONNECTION | Connect to Essential Question | How do different authors get to the “truth”? Each of these selections in this cluster approaches Rosa Parks’s historic bus ride in a different way. “The Story Behind the Bus” is a nonfiction piece that objectively recounts events of the Civil Rights Movement, particularly Rosa Parks’s historic bus ride where she refused to give up her seat to a white passenger. |
| | Connect to Extended Writing Project | Students may further explore the Henry Ford museum website to help them discover an intriguing research topic, such as another historically significant artifact linked to an important era in American history. |

Rosa

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| AUTHOR | Name | Rita Dove |
| | Gender | Female |
| QUALITATIVE FEATURES | Publication Date | 1986 |
| | Genre | Poetry |
| | Access Complex Text Features | <p>Sentence Structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some students may have difficulty with the poet's use of sentence fragments. Point out that the use of these fragments joins ideas and forces the reader to pause for reflection. <p>Connection of Ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students may have difficulty interpreting information throughout the poem. For example, the phrase "carved by a camera flash" suggests that the photo of Parks on the bus was a turning point in the civil rights movement, "carved" into time. <p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students who lack knowledge of segregation laws in the South during the 1950s and of Rosa Parks's historic action and arrest, may struggle with the contextual significance of the poem. |
| QUANTITATIVE FEATURES | Lexile® | N/A |
| | Word Count | 60 |
| READER AND TASKS | Skill Lessons | N/A |
| | Close Read Prompt | Poetry: Who is someone you admire? Write a poem about this person imitating Rita Dove's approach in "Rosa." Before you begin, consider how the speaker in the poem shows admiration for Rosa Parks. Include details to make your reasons for admiring this person clear. |
| BEYOND THE BOOK | Beyond the Book Activity | <p>Writing: Before Rosa Parks</p> <p>In a previous unit, students read <i>Freedom Walkers: The Story of the Montgomery Bus Boycott</i> which tells the story of African Americans who refused to give up their seats to white passengers; however, E.D. Nixon was waiting for the "right person to inspire a battle against bus segregation."</p> <p>Ask students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Write a poem, similar in style and length to "Rosa," about one of the people below who took a stand before Rosa Parks. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Edwina and Marshall Johnson Claudette Colvin Mary Louise Smith Publish their stories for the class. <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you think E.D. Nixon was right to wait for Rosa Parks to inspire the battle against bus segregation? After writing your poem about another African American who refused to give up their seat, do you think the person you wrote about could have sparked the same history altering events as Rosa Parks? |
| | UNIT CONNECTION | Connect to Essential Question |
| Connect to Extended Writing Project | | Students may find inspiration in "Rosa" for their Extended Writing Project by noting how Rita Dove illuminates Rosa Parks' character with descriptive phrases such as "the clean flame of her gaze." |

Rosa Parks: My Story

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|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| AUTHOR | Name | Rosa Parks |
| | Gender | Female |
| QUALITATIVE FEATURES | Publication Date | 1992 |
| | Genre | Informational |
| | Access Complex Text Features | <p>Purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students should understand that a text may be written for more than one purpose. In addition to correcting false ideas about her personal story, Parks also explains a historical time period—the Jim Crow era. <p>Organization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> While Parks uses a chronological text structure, she also includes a flashback in which she recalls her grandfather. Explain that a flashback interrupts the chronological order of events in the text to explain an event that took place earlier. <p>Specific Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Domain-specific words and acronyms such as <i>civil disobedience</i> and <i>NAACP</i> may need defining. Context clues in the text, as well as print or digital resources, can help students define unfamiliar terms. |
| | | |
| QUANTITATIVE FEATURES | Lexile® | 800 |
| | Word Count | 1,396 |
| READER AND TASKS | Skill Lessons | Informational Text Elements, Compare and Contrast, Connotation and Denotation |
| | Close Read Prompt | <p>Compare and Contrast: Rosa Parks, Rita Dove, and the author of “The Story Behind the Bus” all have a story to share about upsetting the balance of power. How does each author introduce, illustrate, or elaborate on this idea of power? How are their arguments about power similar and different? In your response, remember to make connections to ideas in the previous texts that you’ve read.</p> |
| BEYOND THE BOOK | Beyond the Book Activity | <p>Art: The Bus</p> <p>As Rosa Parks waits for the police, she says the bus was quiet except for conversations in low tones. Students will imagine what people in that bus were thinking, feeling, and saying in that moment.</p> <p>Ask students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draw a picture or create a collage of the bus and the people who remained seated there. Imagine what each person and child is thinking and feeling in this moment. Capture each passenger’s expression, include a thought bubble complete with emojis to reveal what they are saying, thinking, or feeling. <p>Once students have created their visuals, put them in small groups to share their artistic representations of this moment.</p> <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What were some of the similarities and differences between visual representations of this moment? How were the children’s feelings and thoughts different from the adults? |
| | | |
| UNIT CONNECTION | Connect to Essential Question | Rosa Parks’s autobiography, <i>Rosa Parks: My Story</i> , provides the perspective of the event from the woman who lived through it. In comparing and contrasting these three texts, students will synthesize the many ways that authors can approach an event or individual to convey their truest version. |
| | Connect to Extended Writing Project | Students may find inspiration for their research projects in Rosa Parks’s autobiography. Encourage students to further explore Parks’s life and accomplishments, other influential individuals from the Civil Rights Movement, or other important social movements in the United States. |

Eleanor Roosevelt: A Life of Discovery

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| AUTHOR | Name | Russell Freedman |
| | Gender | Male |
| QUALITATIVE FEATURES | Publication Date | 1993 |
| | Genre | Informational |
| | Access Complex Text Features | <p>Genre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The text has features of a biography, including a third-person point of view, real people and events, and first-person accounts of the subject's experiences. Some sequential elements are included by anchoring the text in a specific dated event. <p>Organization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Biographical writing is usually organized chronologically, so some students may have difficulty with the use of flashback, which is often used so that the author can start with a key moment and then offer events that influenced that moment. <p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The author's use of historical allusions or references, such as the United Nations, may need to be explained to students. |
| | | |
| QUANTITATIVE FEATURES | Lexile® | 1100 |
| | Word Count | 797 |
| READER AND TASKS | Skill Lessons | N/A |
| | Close Read Prompt | <p>Personal Response: Eleanor Roosevelt did not wish to become First Lady of the United States. Yet she was able to overcome her fear to become one of the most beloved First Ladies in history. Consider how Eleanor's life might relate to your own. Is there a task or dream you would like to achieve? How can you, like Eleanor, overcome any fears you might have in order to achieve success? In your response, write about the goal or dream you have been afraid to achieve. Then, explain what strategy you can use, like Eleanor, to overcome that fear.</p> |
| BEYOND THE BOOK | Beyond the Book Activity | <p>Investigation: The Life of a First Lady</p> <p>Eleanor Roosevelt had a public life and a successful career while First Lady of the United States. Her actions helped pave the way for the women who followed her, encouraging them to take a more active role during their husbands' time in office.</p> <p>Put students into small groups and ask them to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Select a First Lady who held the title after Eleanor Roosevelt. Find out about this woman's public life during her time in the White House. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What issues did she champion? In what way did this woman expand the role of the First Lady? What challenges or resistance did she face? Create a multimedia presentation to share their findings with the class. <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> After listening to each group present, which First Lady did you think was most impressive? What do you think the role of the First Gentleman will be when we elect our first female president? |
| | | |
| UNIT CONNECTION | Connect to Essential Question | How can you stay true to yourself when others don't think you fit in quite right? Initially reluctant to be a president's wife, "poor little rich girl" Eleanor Roosevelt rose to the challenge of being in the national spotlight and in the process discovered her place in the world. She raised the bar of possibilities for all First Ladies who followed her. |
| | Connect to Extended Writing Project | Students can find inspiration from <i>Eleanor Roosevelt: A Life of Discovery</i> as they write about their own goals and aspirations. Have them identify some of the strategies Eleanor used as she worked to overcome her fears and assumed the role of First Lady. |

Brave

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| AUTHOR | Name | Svetlana Chmakova |
| | Gender | Female |
| QUALITATIVE FEATURES | Publication Date | 2017 |
| | Genre | Fiction |
| | Access Complex Text Features | <p>Genre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The visual aspect of the graphic novel adds a layer of complexity to the storytelling. Remind students to study the illustrations, especially those without accompanying text, as the basis for inferences about the plot, characters, and theme. <p>Purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students might think that the primary purpose of a graphic novel is to entertain. Guide them to consider other purposes, such as to create a complex character. Focus on the illustrator's use of perspective, framing, and choice of details. <p>Specific Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Certain terms and phrases, such as <i>gauntlet</i> and <i>running the gauntlet</i>, may need to be defined for students. Context clues in the text or a print or digital dictionary can help students define unfamiliar words. |
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| QUANTITATIVE FEATURES | Lexile® | N/A |
| | Word Count | 671 |
| READER AND TASKS | Skill Lessons | Language, Style, and Audience |
| | Close Read Prompt | Discussion: What does it mean to be true to yourself? In a discussion with your peers, imagine how Jensen and Eleanor Roosevelt would respond to this question. What would they say? What advice would they offer? How might they agree or disagree? Cite evidence of specific word choices and tone that express how they are true to themselves. |
| BEYOND THE BOOK | Beyond the Book Activity | <p>Art: Zombie Survival Guide</p> <p>Students will create a graphic zombie survival guide in a style similar to Chmakova's.</p> <p>Ask students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brainstorm the possible dangers that humans might face during a zombie apocalypse. Identify five tips to help humans survive a zombie apocalypse. Use a combination of humor and drawings to show the reader how to survive. Incorporate elements of graphic novels, like frames, panels, layout, color, shading, and captions, in your survival guide. <p>When students complete their zombie survival guides, host a carousel activity so students can read each other's survival guides and give each other quick written feedback on their artwork, survival tips, and writing.</p> |
| | | |
| UNIT CONNECTION | Connect to Essential Question | How can the target of bullies keep his head held high? In the graphic novel <i>Brave</i> , the main character dreams of saving the world, though the daily experiences of this middle schooler seem to keep getting in his way. |
| | Connect to Extended Writing Project | Students can use <i>Brave</i> as a mentor text for their Extended Writing Project. They may consider researching unlikely heroes who have faced fears or helped others deal with adversity. |

I Never Had It Made

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| AUTHOR | Name | Jackie Robinson |
| | Gender | Male |
| QUALITATIVE FEATURES | Publication Date | 1972 |
| | Genre | Informational |
| | Access Complex Text Features | <p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students may be unfamiliar with Jackie Robinson and the racial issues of his time period. Explain that Jackie Robinson was the first African American to play major league baseball during a time of racial tension. <p>Organization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students may need assistance identifying the text structure of the selection. Robinson uses a cause-and-effect text structure, beginning at the pinnacle of his career and then tracing the steps to explain how he gets there. <p>Sentence Structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some sentences are complex and contain figurative language such as “I was proud to be in the hurricane eye,” and “make the turnstiles hum.” Identifying the commonalities between these ideas may help students with comprehension. |
| | | |
| QUANTITATIVE FEATURES | Lexile® | 940 |
| | Word Count | 1,068 |
| READER AND TASKS | Skill Lessons | Author’s Purpose and Point of View, Central or Main Idea |
| | Close Read Prompt | Argumentative: Jackie Robinson once said, “A life is not important except in the impact it has on other lives.” How does the excerpt from his autobiography, <i>I Never Had It Made: An Autobiography of Jackie Robinson</i> support this statement? Thinking of this quote, why do you think Robinson chose to write an autobiography? Include evidence from the text as you form your response. |
| BEYOND THE BOOK | Beyond the Book Activity | <p>Podcast: Breaking the Color Line</p> <p>In pairs, have students research another person who broke a color line in a different field (e.g., medicine, acting, writing) and record a podcast in which you conduct a mock interview with this famous person.</p> <p>Ask students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research the person you selected. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What field were they in? Why did they want to pursue a career in this field? What resistance did they face? How did they overcome that resistance? Who supported them? Develop a list of 10 interview questions. Decide who will be the host of the podcast and interviewer and who will “play” this famous person from history. Record a podcast in which the interviewer interviews this famous person about his/her life and accomplishments. <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did you enjoy the podcast format? If you had to record a podcast in the future, is there anything you would do differently? What was most challenging about this podcast? |
| | | |
| UNIT CONNECTION | Connect to Essential Question | Is it worth the pain to clear a path for those who follow? In this excerpt from Jackie Robinson’s autobiography, the baseball great describes the challenges he faced as the first black player in the major leagues. |
| | Connect to Extended Writing Project | Students can use <i>I Never Had It Made: An Autobiography of Jackie Robinson</i> as a mentor text for their Extended Writing Project. They may adopt some of Robinson’s methods for employing anecdotes as well as citing specific dates and events as they research their writing projects. |

Touching Spirit Bear

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| AUTHOR | Name | Ben Mikaelson |
| | Gender | Male |
| QUALITATIVE FEATURES | Publication Date | 2001 |
| | Genre | Fiction |
| | Access Complex Text Features | <p>Organization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> After the first paragraph, paragraphs 2 through 10 introduce a flashback into the linear sequence of the plot. Remind students that a flashback is set during an earlier time period and provides information that sheds light on present events. <p>Connection of Ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students may not recognize the author’s symbolic use of circles in the text, and how they relate to the theme. Point out the term <i>Circle Justice</i> as well as other circles in the text such as handcuffs and perhaps the island. <p>Connection of Ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students may not recognize the author’s symbolic use of circles in the text, and how they relate to the theme. Point out the term <i>Circle Justice</i> as well as other circles in the text such as handcuffs and perhaps the island. |
| | | |
| QUANTITATIVE FEATURES | Lexile® | 1100 |
| | Word Count | 1,204 |
| READER AND TASKS | Skill Lessons | Setting |
| | Close Read Prompt | <p>Narrative: The excerpt explains that Cole’s father “agreed to pay all the expenses of banishment, [as] it was just another one of his buyouts.” Pretend that you are Cole’s father, and you are writing a letter to your son. Explain your reasons for paying for the Circle Justice program and how you hope it will help Cole change. How do you think this setting will affect the events of Cole’s life? Use descriptive details from the text in your letter.</p> |
| BEYOND THE BOOK | Beyond the Book Activity | <p>Writing: Life Alone on an Island</p> <p>Students will put themselves in Cole’s shoes and write a series of journal entries that explore his feelings and reveal his day-to-day life on the island.</p> <p>Ask students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Write three journal entries from Cole’s point of view. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Journal entry #1 should be written the first night Cole arrives on the island. Journal entry #2 should be written the night after Edwin’s first food delivery. Journal entry #3 should be written on day 90 after Cole encounters his first bear. Use the journal entries to explore Cole’s thoughts and feelings about his past, present, and future. Include rich sensory details about the island and its animals. Show Cole’s growth mentally, spiritually, and emotionally as he learns to survive on the island. <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Which of the three journal entries was most challenging to write? In your imagination, how did Cole grow and change? |
| | | |
| UNIT CONNECTION | Connect to Essential Question | How can you find your way when you are blinded by anger? In Ben Mikaelson’s novel, troubled young Cole is offered the chance to avoid a prison sentence by surviving in the Alaskan wilderness on his own. |
| | Connect to Extended Writing Project | Students can use <i>Touching Spirit Bear</i> as a mentor text for their Extended Writing Project. They may adopt some of Ben Mikaelson’s methods for description as they craft their own writing projects. |

ELA Grade Level Overview Grade 6

Writing

OVERALL APPROACH TO WRITING INSTRUCTION

StudySync instructs students on a variety of writing forms that adhere to the Common Core English Language Arts Standards. Each unit of the program exposes students to a different writing form and all of its associated skills and processes, which they practice through unit-specific Extended Writing Projects (EWP). At each grade level, one EWP covers each of the following writing forms: narrative, informative, literary analysis, argumentative, and research. Additionally, one unit in each grade contains an Extended Oral Project, where students will create and present a presentation based on the specific requirements of the Common Core English Language Arts Standards for that grade.

Explicit instruction in writing is included reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language lessons and activities, all of which are scaffolded to support learners of varying backgrounds and abilities. Writing activities in each unit, from the in-depth EWP to Close Read writing prompts, self-selected writing responses, writer's notebook activities, Blast responses, and other short writing activities explore different aspects of the writing process, giving students a variety of writing practice opportunities to hone their skills and enhance their understanding of each unit's particular writing form.

This application of the writing skills and processes culminates in the Extended Writing Project, which challenges students and holds them accountable for their learning experiences. The Extended Writing Project prompts students to inquire deeply into a unit's theme and essential question by drawing from textual evidence, research, and their own life experiences to develop extended responses in a variety of writing forms specified in the Common Core English Language Arts Standards. Throughout the Extended Writing project, students evaluate and assess Student Model examples that connect to the modes of writing in each unit. Lessons push students to effectively express themselves and rely on textual evidence as a basis of support for their ideas.

Students have myriad opportunities to enrich their writing, including immersion in specific academic vocabulary, peer review and revision, and group discussion and collaboration. They explore different formats of presenting and publishing the finished works that represent their best possible writing efforts in the program.

Writing Task Chart

| | UNIT 1: Testing Our Limits | UNIT 2: You and Me | UNIT 3: In the Dark |
|---------------------------------|--|---|--|
| Essential Question | What do we do when life gets hard? | How do relationships shape us? | How do you know what to do when there are no instructions? |
| Writing Form | Narrative | Argumentative | Informative |
| Extended Writing Project Prompt | Imagine the very worst possible day. What event or individual makes that day so terrible? How do your characters respond? Write a story in which the main character faces an unexpected challenge on what was supposed to be a normal day. | Think about the ways in which relationships have shaped the lives of the characters, speakers, or authors. Then reflect on your own life. Think of a person who has influenced you in some way. Would your life be different if this person were not in your life? Do you think relationships can truly shape people's futures? Why or why not? | Think about the individuals from this unit who take action even when they are unsure of what lies ahead. Identify three of these individuals and write an informative essay explaining what drives them to respond, take action, or make a decision when there are no guidelines to help them. |
| EWP Mentor Texts | Eleven; Gathering Blue; A Wrinkle in Time; Hatchet; Scout's Honor; Red Scarf Girl: A Memoir of the Cultural Revolution; The Mighty Miss Malone | We're on the Same Team; Walk Two Moons; The Voice in My Head; The Treasure of Lemon Brown | Margaret Bourke-White: Fearless Photographer; Donna O'Meara: The Volcano Lady; Hoot; Dare to be Creative!; Hatshepsut: His Majesty, Herself; Heroes Every Child Should Know; Perseus |
| EWP Process Steps | Plan; Draft; Revise; Edit and Publish | Plan; Draft; Revise; Edit and Publish | Plan; Draft; Revise; Edit and Publish |
| Writing Skills | Organizing Narrative Writing, Story Beginnings, Descriptive Details, Narrative Techniques, Transitions, Conclusions | Organizing Argumentative Writing, Thesis Statement, Reasons and Relevant Evidence, Introductions, Transitions, Style, Conclusions | Thesis Statement, Organizing Informative Writing, Supporting Details, Introductions, Transitions. Precise Language, Style, Conclusions |
| Grammar Skills | Personal Pronouns, Pronouns and Antecedents, Consistent Pronoun Use | Basic Spelling Rules I, Possessive Pronouns, Formal and Informal Language | Parentheses, Brackets, and Ellipses, Prefixes, Basic Spelling Rules II |

| | UNIT 4: Personal Best | UNIT 5: Making Your Mark | UNIT 6: True to Yourself |
|---------------------------------|--|--|--|
| Essential Question | Which qualities of character matter most? | What's your story? | Who are you meant to be? |
| Writing Form | Literary Analysis | Oral Presentation | Research |
| Extended Writing Project Prompt | After reading the texts from the Personal Best unit, write a proposal in which you argue which texts would be the most effective for a school-wide book club. In your proposal, choose one informational and one literary text. Use textual evidence to help support an argument and explain how both of the texts you have chosen develop a theme or a main idea that communicates the qualities of character that matter most. | Think about something for which you hold a position or take a stance. How did you come to adopt this position? What experience, event, person, or story shaped your belief? Give an organized presentation with a specific stand and position. Tell a story from your life that explains how you adopted your position. Your story should focus on a singular moment or experience from your life and clearly relate to your position or stance. | Consider the texts included in the <i>True to Yourself</i> unit, identify a topic you would like to know more about, and write a research report about that topic. In the process, you will learn how to select a research question, develop a research plan, gather and evaluate source materials, and synthesize and present your research findings. |
| EWP Mentor Texts | Bullying in Schools; Celebrities as Heroes; Malala Yousafzai's Nobel Peace Prize Acceptance Speech; Freedom Walkers: The Story of the Montgomery Bus Boycott | The Story of My Life; Warriors Don't Cry | Eleanor Roosevelt: A Life of Discovery; Shree Bose: Never Too Young to Change the World; A BEACON of Hope: The Story of Hannah Herbst |
| EWP Process Steps | Plan; Draft; Revise; Edit and Publish | Plan; Draft; Revise; Edit and Present | Plan; Draft; Revise; Edit and Publish |
| Writing Skills | Thesis Statement, Organizing Argumentative Writing, Reasons and Relevant Evidence, Introductions, Transitions, Style, Conclusions | Evaluating Sources, Organizing an Oral Presentation, Considering Audience and Purpose, Communicating Ideas, Reasons and Relevant Evidence, Sources and Citations | Planning Research, Evaluating Sources, Research and Notetaking, Critiquing Research, Paraphrasing, Sources and Citations, Print and Graphic Features |
| Grammar Skills | Commas with Nonessential Elements, Using Pronouns, Commonly Confused Words | Reflexive and Intensive Pronouns, Sentence Variety, Style | Dashes and Hyphens, Quotation Marks and Italics, Run-On Sentences |

 **WRITING****UNIT 1: TESTING OUR LIMITS**

The Extended Writing Project (EWP) in Grade 6, Unit 1 focuses on narrative writing. Students probe the unit’s essential question—What do we do when life gets hard?—as they write an original narrative. The prompt for this EWP asks students to write about how an unexpected event can sometimes turn into a major challenge. The unit’s selections about testing our limits provide a context for students, and the multiple pieces of fiction in the unit serve as mentor texts for students to analyze and emulate. Over the course of the EWP, students engage in the writing process with specific lessons for planning, drafting, revising, and editing and publishing. During each one of these process steps and in the skills lessons throughout, students will follow the progress and development of an on-grade-level Student Model to see how another student’s writing changes and improves over time.

Skill lessons on Developing Ideas and Organizing Narrative Writing teach concepts specifically called out in the Common Core English Language Arts Standards, while additional skill lessons on Story Beginnings, Descriptive Details, and Narrative Techniques focus on characteristics of the narrative writing genre and help students develop their unique voices. Directed revision leads students as they revise their drafts for clarity, development, organization, word choice, and sentence variety. Targeted Grammar Skill lessons instruct to the specific grammar skills identified in the Common Core English Language Arts Standards. After each skill lesson, students have the opportunity to practice using the skill with created student writing, authentic texts, and their own work.

Student writing is not confined to the EWP. Each Independent Read and Close Read lesson culminates with a writing or speaking prompt in which students reflect on the text or apply the skills they have learned in conjunction with that text. In the Independent Read *Red Scarf Girl*, for example, students are asked to write a personal response about when they had to make a difficult decision, while the prompt for “Jabberwocky” asks them to write a poem using nonsensical words from the text. Close Read prompts specifically ask students to conduct a focused analysis using the skills taught in conjunction with those texts. After students read *Hatchet*, they use the techniques from the Compare and Contrast skill lesson to analyze how the settings in *Hatchet* and *Red Scarf Girl* create conflict for the characters. Later in the unit, students analyze the use of dramatic elements to differentiate characters in the play “The Magic Marker Mystery”.

Other writing tasks in the unit allow students to write in other contexts and for other purposes. Blasts throughout the unit allow students to practice sharing their opinions about tough moral questions and how we define historical fiction, as well as offering them the opportunity to choose their own self-selected reading. Writer’s Notebook activities in Blast, Close Read, and Writing Skill lessons provide students with the opportunity for low-stakes, ungraded writing. In their writer’s notebooks, students write to think, write to reflect, and write to practice skills they’re learning. In the skill lesson for Organizing Narrative Writing, students practice by creating a quick story about five items in the classroom, and in the Developing Ideas lesson, they write a list of qualities, or traits, for a character they have created. In each Close Read, students write to reflect on how the text connects to the essential question for the unit before they engage in a collaborative conversation and write their short constructed response.

 **WRITING****UNIT 2: YOU AND ME**

In Grade 6, Unit 2, the Extended Writing Project (EWP) focuses on argumentative writing. Students will write an original argument in response to the question: Can relationships shape your future? The prompt for this EWP asks students to think about someone important to them and decide whether the relationships we have with others can truly change our lives. The unit's selections about the relationships people enter into provide a thematic connection for students. Over the course of the EWP, students engage in the argumentative writing process with specific lessons for planning, drafting, revising, and editing and publishing. During each of these process steps, and in the skills lessons throughout the writing project, students will follow the progress and development of an on-grade-level Student Model to see how another student's writing changes and improves over time.

Skill lessons on Organizing Argumentative Writing and Reasons and Relevant Evidence teach concepts specifically called out in the Common Core English Language Arts Standards, while additional skill lessons on Thesis Statements, Style, and Transitions focus on characteristics of argumentative writing and help students develop their unique claim. We walk students through the writing process as they revise their drafts for clarity, development, organization, word choice, and sentence variety. Targeted Grammar Skill lessons instruct to the specific grammar skills identified in the Common Core English Language Arts Standards. After each skill lesson, students have the opportunity to practice what they learned, using created student writing, authentic texts, and their own work.

Students will do a great deal of writing in addition to the EWP. Each Independent Read and Close Read lesson culminates with a writing or speaking prompt in which students reflect on the text or apply the skills they have learned in conjunction with that text. In the Independent Read "The Voice In My Head," students are asked to write about the importance of mentors in preparative for their EWP prompt, while the prompt for *The Circuit* asks them to write a personal response about how stability and consistency can affect one's life and lead to feelings of happiness. Close Read prompts specifically ask students to conduct a focused analysis using the skills taught in conjunction with those texts. After students read "A Poem for My Librarian, Mrs. Long," they use the techniques from the Compare and Contrast skill lesson to explore the common themes across three texts. Earlier in the unit, students will explore voice and interpreting text in the novel excerpt *Walk Two Moons* by rewriting the excerpt from an alternative point of view.

Students are given multiple opportunities to write in other contexts and for other purposes. Blasts throughout the unit allow students to explore why poetry has changed so much over time and how sports can be made more inclusive, as well as offering them the opportunity to choose their own self-selected reading. Writer's notebook activities in Blast, Close Read, and Writing Skill lessons provide students with the opportunity for low-stakes, ungraded writing. In their writer's notebooks, students write to think, write to reflect, and write to practice skills they're learning. In the skill lesson for Organizing Argumentative Writing, students practice by free writing from both sides of the argument, and in the Reasons and Relevant Evidence lesson, they practice writing book or movie recommendation for a friend with the strong reasons and convincing evidence. In each Close Read, students write to reflect on how each text connects to the essential question for the unit before they engage in a collaborative conversation and write their short constructed response.

 **WRITING****UNIT 3: IN THE DARK**

The Extended Writing Project (EWP) in Grade 6, Unit 3 focuses on informative writing. Students explore the unit’s essential question—How do you know what to do when there are no instructions?—as they write an informative essay. The prompt for this EWP asks students to identify individuals from texts in the unit and write an informative essay explaining what drives them to respond, take action, or make a decision when there are no guidelines to help them. The unit’s selections that center around the actions people take when there are no instructions, or guidelines, to assist them, provide a context for students, and the nonfiction selections in the unit serve as mentor texts for students to emulate. Students must draw evidence from three of the unit texts and synthesize the connections to the prompt. Over the course of the EWP, students engage in the informative writing process with specific lessons for planning, drafting, revising, and editing and publishing. At each of these process steps and in the skills lessons throughout the project, students will follow the progress and development of an on-grade-level Student Model to see how another student’s writing changes and improves over time.

A skill lesson Organizing Informative Writing teaches concepts specifically called out in the Common Core English Language Arts Standards, while additional skill lessons on Thesis Statements, Supporting Details, and Introductions and Conclusions focus on characteristics of the informative writing genre and help students develop their unique structure. Revision lessons guide students as they revise their drafts for clarity, development, organization, word choice, and sentence variety. Targeted Grammar Skill lessons instruct to the specific grammar skills identified in the Common Core English Language Arts Standards. After each skill lesson, students have the opportunity to practice what they learned, using created student writing, authentic texts, and their own work.

Student writing extends beyond the EWP. Each Independent Read and Close Read lesson culminates with a writing or speaking prompt in which students reflect on the text or apply the skills they have learned in conjunction with that text. In the Independent Read “Elena,” students are asked to write a poem from the point of view of a character from the text, while the prompt for “Donna O’Meara: Volcano Lady” asks them to write a personal response about the kind of natural phenomenon they would explore if they were a scientist or researcher. Close Read prompts specifically ask students to conduct a focused analysis using the skills taught in conjunction with those texts. After students read “Margaret Bourke-White: Fearless Photographer,” they use the techniques from the Compare and Contrast skill lesson to compare and contrast the motivations of the individuals in “Donna O’Meara: Volcano Lady” and “Dare to Be Creative!”. Earlier in the unit, students will analyze informational text structure and technical language while also writing their own narrative inspired by the essay “Everybody Jump.”

Other writing tasks in the unit allow students to write in other contexts and for other purposes. Blasts throughout the unit allow students to practice sharing their opinions about why short-form video is such a popular format for news, as well as offering them the opportunity to choose their own self-selected reading. Writer’s notebook activities in Blast, Close Read, and Writing Skill lessons provide students with the opportunity for low-stakes, ungraded writing. In their writer’s notebooks, students write to think, write to reflect, and write to practice skills they’re learning. In the skill lesson for Organizing Informative Writing, students choose a text structure and write a mock outline and in the Precise Language lesson, they write about the importance of both using and understanding domain-specific

terminology. In each Close Read, students write to reflect on how each text connects to the essential question for the unit before they engage in a collaborative conversation and write their short constructed response.

 **WRITING****UNIT 4: PERSONAL BEST**

Literary analysis writing is the focus of the Extended Writing Project (EWP) in Grade 6, Unit 4. The unit’s essential question—Which qualities of character matter most?—will guide students as they write a literary analysis essay. The prompt for this EWP asks students to write a proposal in which they argue which texts would be the most effective choices for a school-wide book club. The texts in this unit are tied together by themes related to bullying, standing up for what one believes in, doing what is right. The multiple genre texts in the unit mentor students’ understanding so they can analyze and recognize essential genre characteristics. Over the course of the EWP, students engage in the writing process with specific lessons for planning, drafting, revising, and editing and publishing. At each of these process steps, and in the skills lessons throughout the project, students will follow the progress and development of an on-grade-level Student Model to see how another student’s writing changes and improves over time.

Skill lessons on Organizing Argumentative Writing and Thesis Statements teach concepts specifically called out in the Common Core English Language Arts Standards, while additional skill lessons on Reasons and Relevant Evidence, Transitions, Introductions, Conclusions and Style focus on characteristics of the literary analysis writing genre and help students develop their claim. Students receive directed revision instructions for altering their drafts for clarity, development, organization, word choice, and sentence variety. Targeted Grammar Skill lessons instruct to the specific grammar skills identified in the Common Core English Language Arts Standards. After each skill lesson, students have the opportunity to practice what they’ve learned, using created student writing, authentic texts, and their own work.

Students also have opportunities to develop their writing skills outside the EWP. All Independent Read and Close Read lessons culminate in a writing or speaking prompt in which students reflect on the text or apply the skills they have learned in conjunction with that text. In the Independent Read “Priscilla and the Wimps,” students are asked to write about a time when they have seen someone stand up to a bully or a threat, while the prompt for *Freedom Walkers* asks them to write a speech about courage. Close Read prompts specifically ask students to conduct a focused analysis using the skills taught in conjunction with those texts. After students read “All Summer in a Day,” they use the techniques from the Compare and Contrast skill lesson to explore the topic of bullying and the themes that develop in both selections. Later in the unit, students practice debate after reading the point/counterpoint text “Bullying in Schools.”

There are several writing tasks throughout the unit that allow students to write in other genres and for different audiences. Blasts throughout the unit allow students to practice exploring and validating research links, as well as offering them the opportunity to choose their own self-selected reading. Writer’s notebook activities in Blast, Close Read, and Writing Skill lessons provide students with the opportunity for low-stakes, ungraded writing. In their writer’s notebooks, students write to think, write to reflect, and write to practice skills they’re learning. In the skill lesson for Organizing Argumentative Writing, students practice by choosing a text structure for their essay, and in the Reasons and Relevant Evidence lesson they practice stating an opinion and turning that into a thesis or claim. In each Close Read, students write to reflect on how each text connects to the essential question for the unit before they engage in a collaborative conversation and write their short constructed response.

 **WRITING****UNIT 5: MAKING YOUR MARK**

In Grade 6, Unit 5, instead of completing an Extended Writing Project, students work on an Extended Oral Project (EOP). Throughout the unit students will have the opportunity to practice presentation skills via a variety of lessons and activities as they answer the unit’s essential question—What’s your story? The prompt for this unit’s EOP asks students to give an organized presentation explaining how they came to develop a particular position on a topic. The unit’s selections, about how individuals can make an impression, provide a context for students, and the multiple genre texts in the unit serve as mentor texts for students to engage with and match. Over the course of the EOP, students engage in the presentation process with specific lessons for planning, drafting, revising, and editing and presenting. At each of these process steps and in the skills lessons throughout, students will follow the progress and development of an on-grade-level Student Model to see how another student’s oral presentation example changes and improves over time.

Skill lessons on Organizing an Oral Presentation and Evaluating Sources teach concepts specifically called out in the Common Core English Language Arts Standards, while additional skill lessons on Communicating Ideas and Considering Audience and Purpose focus on characteristics of the presentation genre. Turn and Talk activities and StudySync TV episodes model how students can create a presentation and express their ideas orally. The lessons walk students through the presentation planning process as they revise their drafts for clarity, development, organization, word choice, and sentence variety. Targeted Grammar Skill lessons instruct to the specific grammar skills identified in the Common Core English Language Arts Standards. After each skill lesson, students have the opportunity to practice, using created student writing, authentic texts, and their own work.

Students have many chances throughout the unit to practice their oral presentation skills. Where the EWP Independent Read and Close Read lessons culminate in a writing prompt, in the EOP students reflect on the text or apply the skills they have learned in conjunction with that text by orally presenting their ideas. In the Independent Read of the Langston Hughes’ poem “Helen Keller” students write a personal response after a group discussion. Close Read prompts specifically ask students to conduct a focused analysis using the skills taught in conjunction with those texts. To learn the particulars of crafting an oral argument, after students read “Saying Yes” and “The All-American Slurp,” they use the techniques from the Compare and Contrast skill lesson to have a discussion around how each selection makes use of Chinese and American cultures to influence the development of plot and character. Later in the unit, students watch a StudySync TV episode on *The Miracle Worker* to learn how to verbalize their thoughts on a text.

We have included other oral presentation and speaking tasks in the unit for students to further develop their abilities to verbally express themselves. Blasts throughout the unit allow students to practice sharing their opinions about boxing and story-telling, all achieved through turn and talk activities. Writer’s notebook activities in Blast, Close Read, and Writing Skill lessons provide students with the opportunity for low-stakes, ungraded writing with an emphasis on sharing their ideas orally. In the skill lesson for Organizing an Oral Presentation, students practice presenting fictional advice to attendees of a summer camp, and in the Considering Audience and Purpose lesson, they write reflections on students practicing to present their presentations. In each Close Read, students always engage in a collaborative conversation and turn and talk activities.

 **WRITING****UNIT 6: TRUE TO YOURSELF**

Research writing is the focus of the Extended Writing Project (EWP) in Grade 6, Unit 6. The unit’s essential question—Who are you meant to be?—will guide students as they write a research paper. The prompt for this EWP asks students to write a research paper exploring a chosen research topic inspired by the unit’s texts. The selections in this unit ask students to think about how people choose a path to follow and, in doing so, sometimes blaze a pathway for others to follow. The nonfiction selections in the unit serve as example texts for students to analyze and draw inspiration from. Over the course of the EWP, students engage in the research writing process with specific lessons for planning, drafting, revising, and editing and publishing. During each of these process steps and in the skills lessons throughout the project, students will follow the progress and development of an on-grade-level Student Model to see how another student’s writing changes and improves over time.

Skill lessons on Planning Research and Print and Graphic Features teach concepts specifically called out in the Common Core English Language Arts Standards, while additional skill lessons on Evaluating Sources, Sources and Citations, and Research and Notetaking focus on characteristics of the informative writing genre and help students develop their research paper. Students revise their drafts for clarity, development, organization, word choice, and sentence variety, by being led through a series of skill lessons. Targeted Grammar Skill lessons instruct to the specific grammar skills identified in the Common Core English Language Arts Standards. After each skill lesson, students have the opportunity to practice, using created student writing, authentic texts, and their own work.

Student writing is not confined to the EWP. Each Independent Read and Close Read lesson culminates with a writing or speaking prompt in which students reflect on the text or apply the skills they have learned in conjunction with that text. In the Independent Read *Eleanor Roosevelt: A Life of Discovery*, students are asked to write a short response and consider how Eleanor’s life might relate to their own, and whether there is a task or dream they would like to achieve. Close Read prompts specifically ask students to conduct a focused analysis using the skills taught in conjunction with those texts. The prompt for “Letter to His Daughter” asks them to think about what W. E. B. Du Bois wants his daughter to understand about holding true to one’s values and beliefs. Students will compare and contrast the text elements each author uses in “The Story Behind the Bus,” “Rosa,” and *Rosa Parks: My Story*, in addition to examining how each author explores the idea of upsetting the balance of power.

We have included other writing tasks in the unit for students to write in other genres and contexts. Blasts throughout the unit allow students to practice sharing their opinions on topics such as the rising popularity of realism and the theme of self-discovery in young adult fiction, as well as offering them the opportunity to choose their own self-selected reading. Writer’s Notebook activities in Blast, Close Read, and Writing Skill lessons provide students with the opportunity for low-stakes, ungraded writing. In their notebooks, students write to think, write to reflect, and write to practice skills they’re learning. In the skill lesson for Planning Research, students practice by sorting research questions, and in the Print and Graphic Features lesson, they practice identifying print and graphic elements that help make research clearer and more engaging. In each Close Read, students write to reflect on how each text connects to the essential question for the unit before they engage in a collaborative conversation and write their short constructed response.



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