



 **studysync**[®]

ELA GRADE LEVEL OVERVIEWS

GRADE 8

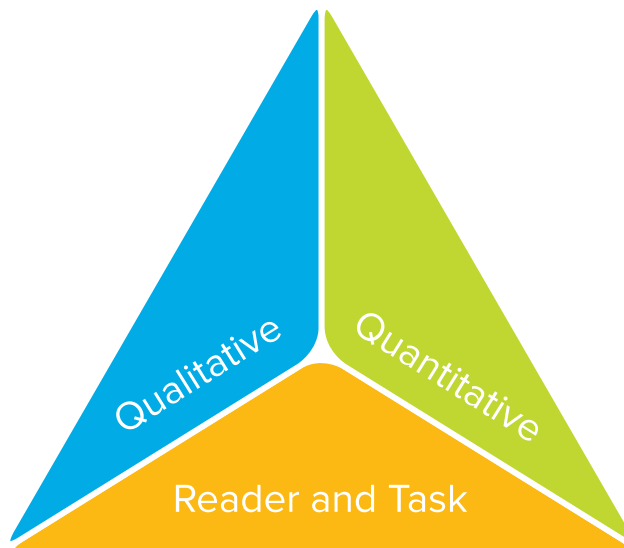


INTRODUCTION | GRADE 8

The Grade 8 Core ELA Units take students through literary and nonfiction texts that explore how individuals are affected by their choices, their relationships, and the world around them. In Unit 1, Everyone Loves a Mystery, students will try to determine what attracts us to stories of suspense. Unit 2, Past and Present, asks the Essential Question: What makes you, you? Unit 3, No Risk, No Reward, asks students to consider why we take chances, while Unit 4, Hear Me Out, asks students to consider the unit’s driving question—How do you choose the right words?—by providing a range of texts that allow students to consider how a person’s words can affect an audience. Next, Unit 5’s Trying Times asks students to think about who they are in a crisis. Finally, students finish up the year with an examination of science fiction and fantasy texts as they think about the question “What do other worlds teach us about our own?” in Unit 6, Beyond Reality.

ELA Grade Level Overview Grade 8

Text Complexity



TEXT COMPLEXITY

UNIT 1: EVERYONE LOVES A MYSTERY

Unit Title: Everyone Loves a Mystery

Essential Question: What attracts us to the mysterious?

Genre Focus: Fiction

Overview

Hairs rising on the back of your neck? Lips curling up into a wince? Palms a little sweaty? These are tell-tale signs that you are in the grips of suspense.

But what attracts us to mystery and suspense? We may have wondered what keeps us from closing the book or changing the channel when confronted with something scary, or compels us to experience in stories the very things we spend our lives trying to avoid. Why do we do it?

Those are the questions your students will explore in this Grade 8 unit.

Edgar Allan Poe. Shirley Jackson. Neil Gaiman. Masters of suspense stories are at work in this unit, with its focus on fiction. And there's more: Alfred Hitchcock, the "master of suspense" at the movies, shares tricks of the trade in a personal essay, and students also have the chance to read about real-life suspense in an account by famed reporter Nellie Bly. After reading classic thrillers and surprising mysteries within and across genres, your students will try their own hands at crafting fiction, applying what they have learned about suspense to their own narrative writing projects. Students will begin this unit as readers, brought to the edge of their seats by hair-raising tales, and they will finish as writers, leading you and their peers through hair-raising stories of their own.

Text Complexity

In Grade 8 Unit 1 students continue their development as critical thinkers at an appropriate grade level. Though this unit focuses on the genre of fiction, it features both poetry and informational texts. With a Lexile range of 590-1090, most texts in this unit are between 940L and 1010L, an accessible starting point for eighth graders. Additionally, the vocabulary, sentence structures, text features, content, and relationships among ideas make these texts accessible to eighth graders, enabling them to grow as readers by interacting with such appropriately challenging texts.

The unit begins with “The Tell Tale Heart,” which is used in the SyncStart unit. Though this text does not have the highest Lexile, the dashes, capital letters and long sentences, as well as the narrator’s fractured thoughts, may prove difficult for some students to follow. To assist with these potential stumbling blocks, the text has the largest number of lessons supporting it. The unique sentence structure and narrative point of view 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, Textual Evidence, and Collaborative Conversations do not just build a foundation for the school year; they also allow students to encounter this text repeatedly using different perspectives, which makes this difficult text more manageable.

Throughout the unit, students read and analyze a collection of fiction pieces in a common Lexile band. In addition to their shared genre, they also share a thematic link, a focus on suspense and mystery. These texts present a variety of fictional worlds and formats. The short story “The Monkey’s Paw” illustrates how authors use plot to create a foundation for suspense, while the *The Conjure-Man Dies: A Mystery Tale of Dark Harlem* and “The Lottery” walk students through traditional “spooky” narratives, strengthening their understanding of the genre and its different formats. *The Graveyard Book* and “Sympathy” are similar in that they introduce new formats to the genre: poetry and text with graphics. The shared format 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 informational selections in this unit showcase more text difficulty: “Let ‘Em Play God” and *Ten Days in a Mad-House*. “Let ‘Em Play God” follows students’ intensive study of “The Tell Tale Heart,” and provides insight into how a master of suspense creates emotional responses from his audiences. This topical connection helps to mitigate the lack of prior knowledge students may have about Hitchcock’s films. Hitchcock’s tone in the text, as well as his reliance on real life events from his film career, may help students overcome difficulty with vocabulary or prior knowledge. The use of textual evidence to analyze author’s purpose and point of view highlights the importance of reading complex texts closely and thoughtfully in order to construct meaning. *Ten Days in a Mad-House* falls on the higher end of the complexity band as well, but that complexity is balanced by its straightforward narration and a poem 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 *Ten Days in a Mad-House* and “Sympathy” ask students to compare and contrast the accounts of each author as they discuss feelings of imprisonment. This first comparative task is well suited for these two thematically linked texts. In a second set of texts, *The Graveyard Book*, *The Conjure-Man Dies: A Mystery Tale of Dark Harlem*, and “The Monkey’s Paw,” 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 compare and contrast the uses of supernatural elements in tales of suspense and mystery.

English Language Learner Resources

Lessons in the English Language Learner Resources section offer explicit ELL 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, “Inside the House” and “Lucky Coin,” 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 *Monster* and “The Monkey’s Paw.”

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 scary and the mysterious, students will complete an Extended Oral Project which can be used in place of or as an extension to the Extended Writing Project. In this unit, students will plan and present a suspenseful scene in the form of a group presentation.

The Tell-Tale Heart

AUTHOR	Name	Edgar Allan Poe
	Gender	Male
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1843
	Genre	Fiction
	Access Complex Text Features	<p>Genre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This classic short story, told in first-person point of view, may challenge some students as the narrator alternates between external description and internal thought. Readers will need to distinguish between fact and perception. <p>Sentence Structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Long sentences are broken by dashes and capital letters to indicate the narrator's anxious, fragmented thinking. Poe uses nonstandard font, punctuation, and other devices as visual cues to the narrator's emotional state.
		<p>Specific Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difficult vocabulary, such as <i>unperceived</i> and <i>over-acuteness</i>, may present a challenge to readers. Remind readers to use context clues, as well as knowledge of Greek and Latin roots and affixes, to help them define unknown words.
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Lexile®	950
	Word Count	2,163
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Annotation, Context Clues, Reading Comprehension, Text-Dependent Resources, Textual Evidence, Language, Style, and Audience, Collaborative Conversations, Short Constructed Responses, Peer Review
	Close Read Prompt	Literary Analysis: Can the narrator of “The Tell-Tale Heart” be trusted? Consider the author’s word choice, tone, and description of events as you draw conclusions about the narrator’s state of mind. Be sure to support your ideas with evidence from the text.
BEYOND THE BOOK	Beyond the Book Activity	<p>Mock Trial: The Insanity Defense</p> <p>Turn your class into a courtroom to try the story’s narrator for the murder of the old man. Have students role play the judge, jury, defense team, prosecution, and key witnesses. The narrator and his defense team should plead not guilty by reason of insanity.</p> <p>During the trial:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allow the prosecution to call witnesses and present its case using evidence from the text and other reasonable inferences they can make based on the story. Have the defense take its turn. Allow both sides to present a brief closing argument to the jury. Ask the jury to take a few minutes to deliberate and then share its verdict with the class. Be sure to have the jury explain which parts of the case they believed the prosecution and defense made most compellingly.
UNIT CONNECTION	Connect to Essential Question	How do we know when a narrator is reliable? In Edgar Allan Poe’s classic short story “The Tell-Tale Heart”, the central mystery about the main character concerns his sanity in the midst of a terrible murder confession. Will he give himself away, or get away with murder?
	Connect to Extended Writing Project	Students can use “The Tell-Tale Heart” as a mentor text for their Extended Writing Project. They may adopt some of Edgar Allan Poe’s methods for creating suspense as they craft their own suspenseful narratives.

Monster

AUTHOR	Name	Walter Dean Myers
	Gender	Male
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1999
	Genre	Fiction
	Access Complex Text Features	<p>Organization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students may find it confusing that this novel excerpt consists mainly of a screenplay as imagined by the main character. The opening text is a prologue in the form of a journal entry by the character. <p>Sentence Structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students may not be used to the high proportion of short sentences, which mirror the brusque nature of the criminal justice system. <p>Specific Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The text includes some vocabulary specific to prisons and courtrooms, including <i>cell block</i>, <i>stenographer</i>, and <i>U-bolt</i>. Students should use a dictionary and context clues to find the meanings of unfamiliar words.
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Lexile®	590
	Word Count	1,391
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Character
	Close Read Prompt	Narrative: Choose a section from the screenplay in <i>Monster</i> and rewrite it as a story rather than a screenplay. Include lines of dialogue but also add descriptions about the characters' feelings and responses to one another.
BEYOND THE BOOK	Beyond the Book Activity	<p>Graphic Story: Monster</p> <p>Students will take the screenplay in <i>Monster</i> and use it to design a graphic story of Steve's experience in jail and court.</p> <p>Ask students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read through the screenplay, focusing on the bold screen directions and noting all the places where the scenes change. Create a storyboard with rough sketches to organize the story, portraying each scene as an image. Use details from the screen directions and dialogue to create a visual depiction of each scene. Students can use pen and paper or an online comic creator to create their graphic stories. Publish stories for feedback from the class. <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What was the most challenging part of turning this screenplay into a graphic story? Which scene was toughest to portray visually? How did you use color and other details to reflect Steve's emotional state in each scene?
UNIT CONNECTION	Connect to Essential Question	Suspense is created not only by the supernatural or eerie. With the harsh realism of "Monster," Walter Dean Myers draws readers into the tense story of a teenage boy on trial for murder. Did he commit the crime? What will the verdict be? And is the question of his guilt or innocence even relevant in a criminal justice system that is not always just?
	Connect to Extended Writing Project	While writing their literary analyses, students can find inspiration from Walter Dean Myers's <i>Monster</i> for their Extended Oral Project. They may consider Steve Harmon's different approaches to addressing a problem (i.e. his journal entries and screenplay are two different ways to argue a claim or point).

Let 'Em Play God

AUTHOR	Name	Alfred Hitchcock
	Gender	Male
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1948
	Genre	Informational
	Access Complex Text Features	<p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many Hitchcock films, such as <i>Shadow of a Doubt</i> (1943), <i>Rope</i> (1948), and <i>North by Northwest</i> (1959), generate suspense through fugitives on the run. Students may benefit from watching excerpts or trailers from the films to build context. <p>Specific Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idiomatic expressions, such as “cry for joy” and “work like the devil,” may need to be explained. It may be helpful for the teacher to provide sample sentences applying these idioms in context. <p>Connection of Ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Abstract ideas, such as suspense and the idea of an audience “playing God,” are developed with concrete examples. Students may benefit by viewing an excerpt from the film <i>Rope</i> to better understand Hitchcock’s points about it.
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Lexile®	1070
	Word Count	752
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Generating Questions, Author’s Purpose and Point of View
	Close Read Prompt	Literary Analysis: What is Hitchcock’s purpose and point of view in “Let ‘Em Play God”? How does his point of view emerge throughout the essay? Support your writing with evidence from the text.
BEYOND THE BOOK	Beyond the Book Activity	<p>Performance: The Suspense Is Killing Me</p> <p>Place students in small groups. Challenge them to construct a short, suspenseful scene that allows the audience to “play God,” or see everything. Students must collaboratively create the scenario and decide how they will tell the audience the secrets of the scene while keeping characters in the dark.</p> <p>To reflect, follow each performance with a class conversation about the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What secrets were clear to the audience but not the characters? How did you feel as you watched? What could the group have done to make the scene even more suspenseful?
UNIT CONNECTION	Connect to Essential Question	Anyone who creates thrillers or mysteries knows that it’s crucial to keep the reader or the audience guessing. How does a filmmaker keep an audience’s interest in movie after movie? In this essay, the “master of suspense,” Alfred Hitchcock, shares his secret for creating unforgettable suspense films.
	Connect to Extended Writing Project	Students can use “Let ‘Em Play God” as a mentor text for their Extended Writing Project. They may adopt some of Alfred Hitchcock’s methods for creating suspense as they craft their own suspenseful narratives.

Sympathy

AUTHOR	Name	Paul Laurence Dunbar
	Gender	Male
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1899
	Genre	Poetry
	Access Complex Text Features	<p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The poem was written during the post-Reconstruction era in the United States, when African Americans faced Jim Crow laws, segregation, discrimination, and harsh economic realities. Explain that although African Americans had been liberated from slavery and given basic rights as citizens, they still faced discrimination and oppression. <p>Organization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The poem is made up of three stanzas. There is a repeating phrase at the beginning and end of each stanza, the first stating, “I know what the caged bird feels,” the second affirming, “I know why the caged bird beats his wing,” and the third stanza asserting, “I know why the caged bird sings.” Explain to students line repetition in poems is often used to emphasize meaning(s). <p>Specific Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poetic and archaic vocabulary, such as <i>opes</i> (“open”) and <i>fain</i> (“with pleasure; gladly”), may need defining. Remind students to use context clues while reading, and also to use a dictionary to define unfamiliar words.
	Lexile®	N/A
Word Count	186	
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	N/A
	Close Read Prompt	<p>Personal Response: Paul Laurence Dunbar uses the imagery of a caged bird to communicate feelings of oppression and a lack of freedom. What images from the poem were effective in communicating these feelings? How does it make you feel? Can you sympathize with someone who feels trapped like this? Choose several moments in the poem that you felt were effective and explain your reaction. Make sure to include details from the poem and your own thoughts and feelings in your response.</p>
BEYOND THE BOOK	Beyond the Book Activity	<p>Photography: Where do you see the word “Sympathy”?</p> <p>Take students outside your classroom and work in pairs or groups of three. Give students 10 minutes to take a series of three photographs that inspired by the emotions or descriptions in the poem. After all groups have finished, return to the classroom to have them share their images as their group re-reads the poem aloud for the class.</p> <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do your images reflect the feeling or emotion of the poem? What words might you use to describe your images?
	Connect to Essential Question	The feeling of being trapped naturally creates suspense. In what different ways can a person feel trapped? Paul Laurence Dunbar eloquently and vividly describes a particularly painful way in the poem “Sympathy.”
UNIT CONNECTION	Connect to Extended Writing Project	Students can find inspiration from “Sympathy” for their suspenseful narratives. Have them work to create images that elicit strong emotions in readers and help them sympathize and perhaps even identify with characters.

Ten Days in a Mad-House (Chapter 4)

AUTHOR	Name	Nellie Bly
	Gender	Female
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1887
	Genre	Informational
	Access Complex Text Features	<p>Organization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The first-person narrative switches back and forth between the account of Bly’s feigned insanity and her thoughts regarding the success of her scheme. Readers may benefit by highlighting Bly’s thoughts to separate them from the insanity scheme. <p>Specific Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some idiomatic expressions, such as a description of a judge “dealing out the milk of human kindness by wholesale,” may present challenges for some readers. In this case, it refers to a judge who is exceedingly kind.
		<p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students may be unfamiliar with investigative journalism. Students may be unfamiliar with the practice of court-ordered assignment to an insane asylum without the commission of a crime.
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Lexile®	1170
	Word Count	2,002
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Author’s Purpose and Point of View, Compare and Contrast
	Close Read Prompt	<p>Compare and Contrast: Nellie Bly wants to access a “mad-house” from which other people would want to escape. Imagine that the speaker of “Sympathy” is an inmate being wrongly held there and that Bly conducts an interview with the inmate. Write a brief account as Bly might for her newspaper. Be sure to show the contrasts between the two situations, relying on evidence from both texts.</p>
BEYOND THE BOOK	Beyond the Book Activity	<p>Debate: Ethical Journalism</p> <p>Divide the class into two groups to debate this proposition: It’s okay for journalists to pretend to be someone they are not to gain access to people and places they could not otherwise observe.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assign one group to argue in favor of the proposition and one group to argue against it. Have students prepare for the formal debate by compiling examples and evidence from <i>Ten Days in a Mad-House</i> and other contemporary examples of undercover journalism. When it’s time to conduct the debate, consider bringing in an outside panel (e.g., a principal) to judge the winner and explain which evidence swayed their decision. <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What evidence most effectively proved your group’s point? Why?
UNIT CONNECTION	Connect to Essential Question	Journalist Nellie Bly, on assignment for her paper in 1887, goes undercover to get inside an insane asylum, or mad-house, to report on what she finds inside. The result was the book <i>Ten Days in a Mad-House</i> . What draws her to this mysterious other world? What will she find?
	Connect to Extended Writing Project	Students can use Nellie’s Bly’s reportage in <i>Ten Days in a Mad-House</i> as inspiration for their Extended Writing Project. They may gather ideas to create situations, settings, and characters for fiction.

The Lottery

AUTHOR	Name	Shirley Jackson
	Gender	Female
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1948
	Genre	Fiction
	Access Complex Text Features	<p>Genre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The Lottery” reads like a detailed report on an event, and the slow development of the plot may challenge some readers. • Teachers might preview that writers of horror and suspense often create plot twists in ordinary settings. <p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The strict adherence to tradition is critical to understanding the story’s theme, and may be difficult to grasp. • Discussion of traditions in their own families or cultures may help prepare students for the narrative. <p>Sentence Structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jackson’s use of compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences may be a challenge for some readers. • Annotating and highlighting sections of longer sentences may help unlock meaning.
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Lexile®	1090
	Word Count	3,379
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Making and Confirming Predictions, Theme, Allusion
	Close Read Prompt	<p>Literary Analysis: In Shirley Jackson’s “The Lottery,” things aren’t exactly as they appear. What is one theme or message that you think the author develops in the story? How does she use the setting to surprise readers and build on the theme? How do allusions deepen your understanding of the text and its theme? Monitor details from the story to show how Shirley Jackson develops the theme through the setting and allusions.</p>
BEYOND THE BOOK	Beyond the Book Activity	<p>Research Project: Unusual Traditions</p> <p>Divide students into small groups to identify and learn more about traditions in a part of the world that fascinates them. The tradition they focus on does not need to be as dark or foreboding as the one Shirley Jackson creates in “The Lottery.” Examples for your students might include things like the Palio di Siena in Italy or La Tomatina in Spain.</p> <p>Ask students to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the origins of the tradition? • How has it changed over time? • What objects symbolize the meaning of the tradition? • What meaning does the tradition hold for members of the culture? <p>Have groups answer these questions as they share their findings with the class.</p>
UNIT CONNECTION	Connect to Essential Question	Shirley Jackson’s short story caused a sensation when it was first published. How could a tale about a tradition in an ordinary American town create such powerful interest?
	Connect to Extended Writing Project	Students can use “The Lottery” as a mentor text for their Extended Writing Project. They may take inspiration from Shirley Jackson’s setting or theme for suspenseful action to occur.

The Graveyard Book

AUTHOR	Name	Neil Gaiman and P. Craig Russell
	Gender	Male
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	2014
	Genre	Fiction
	Access Complex Text Features	<p>Genre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The original novel by Neil Gaiman was turned into a graphic novel, which includes illustrated panels, text boxes, and speech bubbles unique to that form. <p>Organization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The arrangement of the illustrations on each page, containing story details essential for following the narrative, may not be clear for some students. <p>Connection of Ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Readers must link the details from the illustrations, the content of the speech bubbles, and the narration in the panels to follow the complete story. Students may need to restate the narrative in their own words in annotations.
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Lexile®	N/A
	Word Count	1,942
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	N/A
	Close Read Prompt	<p>Personal Response: Think about the title of this book and the excerpt that follows. What kind of story did you expect to read based on the title? Why? Did your expectations change after you read the excerpt? Use quotations and descriptions from the excerpt to explain whether or not the book matched what you expected from the title.</p>
BEYOND THE BOOK	Beyond the Book Activity	<p>Art: Graphic Transformation</p> <p><i>The Graveyard Book</i> is a graphic novel version of the original novel. Challenge students to transform another story (or a portion of another story) from this unit into a graphic story using pictures and dialogue. When they've finished creating their graphic stories, place students in small groups to share their works with their classmates.</p> <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What aspects of the story were easiest to transform into graphic panels? What was most difficult? Did the graphic story medium alter the meaning or the content of the story? Why or why not?
UNIT CONNECTION	Connect to Essential Question	In <i>The Graveyard Book</i> , an infant falls into the care of a graveyard community of ghosts. Will these supernatural caretakers live up to the challenge?
	Connect to Extended Writing Project	Students can use <i>The Graveyard Book</i> as a mentor text for their Extended Writing Project. They may take inspiration from Neil Gaiman's supernatural elements to create their own narratives.

The Conjure-Man Dies: A Mystery Tale of Dark Harlem

AUTHOR	Name	Rudolph Fisher
	Gender	Male
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1932
	Genre	Fiction
	Access Complex Text Features	<p>Specific Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vocabulary specific to the setting, such as <i>Harlem</i>, <i>Battery Park</i>, and <i>Seventh Avenue</i>, set the novel in New York City. Professions noted, such as <i>undertaker</i> and <i>psychist</i>, as well as other vocabulary, may need to be defined. <p>Genre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The novel is divided into chapters, noted with numerals. The narration establishes the time period, locations, characters, and mystery to be solved, but students may need to use highlighting to follow key events.
		<p>Sentence Structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences, as well as descriptive phrases in the narration, may require simplifying.
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Lexile®	1010
	Word Count	1,710
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	N/A
	Close Read Prompt	<p>Personal Response: In the first section of <i>The Conjure-Man Dies</i>, the author describes Harlem in great detail. Reread this section and note your reaction. What can you see or hear? What phrases are particularly effective, and why? How does the author use this description to gradually create a sense of mystery? Be sure to cite textual evidence.</p>
BEYOND THE BOOK	Beyond the Book Activity	<p>Research Project: The Harlem Renaissance</p> <p>Rudolph Fisher was a central literary figure of the Harlem Renaissance. Place students into small groups to research the following aspects of the literary and cultural movement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Harlem, New York City The time period of the Harlem Renaissance Key themes and ideas of the movement Prominent Harlem Renaissance authors Culture, music, and fashion <p>Allow groups time to present their key findings to the class.</p> <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What authors, artists, and musicians were most interesting to you? Why? What other historical figures might you continue to learn about on your own?
UNIT CONNECTION	Connect to Essential Question	In an excerpt from a novel, <i>The Conjure-Man Dies: A Mystery Tale of Dark Harlem</i> , Dr. Archer is called upon to examine the mysterious circumstances surrounding the death of a local conjure-man, or fortune teller.
	Connect to Extended Writing Project	Students can use <i>The Conjure-Man Dies: A Mystery Tale of Dark Harlem</i> as a mentor text for their Extended Writing Project. They may adopt Rudolph Fisher's style of description for their own narratives.

The Monkey's Paw

AUTHOR	Name	W.W. Jacobs
	Gender	Male
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1902
	Genre	Fiction
	Access Complex Text Features	<p>Genre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The author creates suspense and develops a major theme in this classic short story as readers begin to suspect, through foreshadowing and dialogue, that the consequences of wishes may be terrible. Highlighting examples of literary elements may help students uncover the theme. <p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The story is set in Victorian England, when the British Empire extended to India, and students may be unfamiliar with Indian cultural references. Explain that the phrase “old temples and fakirs” refers to religious locations and the Muslims or Hindus who lived on alms, or charity.
		<p>Sentence Structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difficult vocabulary, such as <i>presumptuous</i> (behavior that does not observe limits as to what is proper) and <i>doggedly</i> (in a manner of persistence), may need defining. Remind students to use context clues while reading, and also to use a dictionary to define unfamiliar words.
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Lexile®	940
	Word Count	3,940
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Plot, Story Structure
	Close Read Prompt	<p>Compare and Contrast: “The Monkey’s Paw,” a short story, <i>The Conjure-Man Dies</i>, an excerpt from a novel, and <i>The Graveyard Book</i>, a graphic novel excerpt, have different story structures. How do these different structures contribute to the meaning of the texts? How do they impact the development of the plot? Compare and contrast how structure helps reveal the meaning of “The Monkey’s Paw” against the <i>The Conjure-Man Dies</i> or <i>The Graveyard Book</i>. Remember to support your ideas with evidence from the texts.</p>
BEYOND THE BOOK	Beyond the Book Activity	<p>Writing: 6 Random Objects</p> <p>Provide all students in the class the same random list of objects. Come up with your own list or use this one:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Toothbrush, rubber band, washing machine, tennis racket, bird seed, wedding ring <p>Ask students to write a short mystery story that somehow incorporates all six objects. At least one of the objects should play a significant role in the plot of the story. When they’ve finished, place students in small groups to share their works with their classmates.</p> <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did the constraint of using the six objects make writing this story easier or more difficult? Why?
UNIT CONNECTION	Connect to Essential Question	In the classic story of suspense, “The Monkey’s Paw” by W.W. Jacobs, we see the White family drawn to the mystery of the monkey’s paw. Readers have the chance to consider what they would do in a similar situation. Would they be able to resist the mystery of the monkey’s paw or would they be drawn to it, like the family?
	Connect to Extended Writing Project	Students can use “The Monkey’s Paw” as a mentor text for their Extended Writing Projects. They may adopt some of W. W. Jacobs’s methods for creating suspense as they craft their own narratives.

Phineas Gage: A Gruesome but True Story About Brain Science

AUTHOR	Name	W.W. Jacobs
	Gender	Male
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	2004
	Genre	Informational
	Access Complex Text Features	<p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phineas Gage is the foreman of a railroad crew. References to railroad construction during may need explanation. Gage’s accident injured the frontal lobe of his brain. This area is the “control panel” of personality and ability to communicate. <p>Purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The selection is an informational text that is told as a narrative. Because of the narrative elements, the author’s purpose may need to be clarified for students.
		<p>Organization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The text does not follow a chronological structure or use past tense, which may challenge some students. Events that appear out of chronological order include the introduction of the accident and Gage’s death in the introductory paragraphs.
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Lexile®	970
	Word Count	1,396
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Central or Main Idea, Textual Evidence
	Close Read Prompt	Informative: Explain how Phineas’s reaction to his serious injury impacts Dr. Williams. How do the details about the interaction between Phineas Gage and Dr. Williams connect to the central or main idea of the overall text? Be sure to cite specific textual evidence to support your claim.
BEYOND THE BOOK	Beyond the Book Activity	<p>Comic Strip: Tell the Whole Story of Phineas Gage</p> <p>The story of Phineas Gage is told in horrible detail but there are pieces of information missing. The sand is never poured down the hole. What happened? Something or someone distracts Phineas. What was it?</p> <p>Ask students to create comic strip panels depicting this tragic scene. They should use the details from the first chapter to show what is known and use their imaginations to fill in the missing information to tell the whole story of what happened that day.</p>
UNIT CONNECTION	Connect to Essential Question	When a man amazingly survives a freak accident, he and his brain become a world-famous mystery, especially to psychologists, medical researchers, and doctors.
	Connect to Extended Writing Project	Students can use <i>Phineas Gage: A Gruesome but True Story About Brain Science</i> as a resource when writing their informational essays. John Fleischman’s style may suggest ideas for students’ writing.

TEXT COMPLEXITY

UNIT 2: PAST AND PRESENT

Unit Title: Past and Present

Essential Question: What makes you, you?

Genre Focus: Poetry

Overview

What makes us who we are? As we form bonds with other people and our communities over time, we realize that experiences from our past shape who we are in the present. With a genre focus on poetry, this Grade 8 unit prepares students to explore questions about how we see ourselves in the world.

Poets Emily Dickinson, Robert Frost, Yusef Komunyakaa, and Natasha Trethewey use description and figurative language to examine ideas related to identity and community. Author Thanhha Lai approaches questions of belonging in a novel written in verse. WNBA star Swin Cash and former First Lady Michelle Obama, in informational texts, discuss the people and events who helped make them who they are. Judith Ortiz Cofer and Sandra Cisneros use fiction to inspire students to think about how characters' identities are affected by the world around them. After reading about these ideas within and across genres, your students will write a literary analysis, applying what they have learned from the unit's literature, speeches, and essays to a literary analysis writing project.

Students in this unit will discover what it means to be yourself, to feel like nobody, and even to feel on top of the world, using the lens of figurative language to understand how authors express varied ideas about identity and belonging, past and present.

Text Complexity

Grade 8 Unit 2 finds students advancing their abilities of text analysis and recognizing genre characteristics. This unit's genre focus is poetry but also includes a speech, a persuasive personal essay, and several fiction selections. With a Lexile range of 660-1280, most texts in this unit are between 740L and 850L, a perfect starting point for eighth graders. Additionally, the vocabulary, sentence structures, text and poetic features, content, and relationships among ideas make these texts accessible to eighth graders, enabling them to grow as readers by interacting with such appropriately challenging texts.

Unit 2 begins with a challenging poem by Emily Dickinson and a personal essay about the complexities of identity. “I’m Nobody! Who are you?” will challenge students on several levels, though a skills lesson in recognizing genre characteristics at the beginning of the unit will alleviate some of these difficulties. Dickinson’s disregard of the norms of rhyme, grammar, and punctuation is read in concert with skills lessons on poetic structure, visualizing and irony. The progression of skills lesson will help students break down and visualize the more challenging images in this poem.

Two texts in this unit, “Curtain Call” and “So where are you from?” are grouped together for students to Compare Within and Across Genres. A personal essay and poem are linked thematically by their contrasting of past events or people and their influence on our present. “Curtain Call,” a personal essay about one player’s career in the WNBA, is a lower Lexile text that students may lack prior sports’ knowledge to fully access. “So where are you from?” is a slightly more challenging text. The larger message of “So where are you from?” may be lost on students because of the third person narration, and readers may benefit from a discussion of migration and cross-cultural identity. A skill lesson on finding the central or main idea will make both of these texts further accessible to students.

Throughout this unit, students will encounter texts and poems in the same Lexile and difficulty bands. In addition to their shared genre, they also share a thematic link, a focus on the past and the present. These texts will challenge students to consider different formats and genres, as well as lessons on plot, figurative language, theme, and poetic elements and structure. In “Slam, Dunk & Hook,” students will be exposed to free verse and possibly disorienting line breaks. A lack of prior knowledge about Mexican-American culture and religious schooling may prevent access for some students when reading *The House on Mango Street*. Additionally, students may struggle with the prior knowledge required to understand car culture in the 1950s and 60s, and also with the Spanish vocabulary intermittently included in “Abuela Invents the Zero.” Similar levels of difficulty in these selections will allow students to develop skills to access a variety of texts throughout this unit.

Three texts in this unit are grouped together for the purpose of Comparing Within and Across Genres. Together, these texts will ask students to consider how we make sense of ourselves in the world. The first text, “Inside Out and Back Again,” though fiction, is written in verse and contains a collection of writing structures. This challenging format is made more accessible by a thematic connection to the other texts about assimilating in a new place. “Theories of Time and Space” is another free verse poem, linked in subject to the other two texts, that should be mostly accessible to students after having read the previous free verse selections throughout this unit. The last piece of poetry in the unit and the final text for this comparison activity is Robert Frost’s “The Road Not Taken.” A lack of prior knowledge about lyric poetry and figurative language may hinder some students, but could easily be remedied by a quick discussion.

Michelle Obama’s “Commencement Address to the Santa Fe Indian School” will introduce students to a thematically linked text and skills that build argumentative abilities. Prior knowledge about Native American relations in New Mexico is essential for accessing this text and should be addressed with students prior to their reading. Encourage

students to break down the main ideas in this text to better understand the connection of ideas and the speaker's main argument. The texts in this unit together will prepare students for the analytical and close reading skills they will need in future units throughout the year.

English Language Learner Resources

Lessons in the English Language Learner Resources section offer explicit ELL 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 Others” and “Mom’s First Day,” 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 Outsiders* and “Abuela Invents the Zero.”

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 and relationships, students will complete an Extended Oral Project which can be used in place of or as an extension to the Extended Writing Project. In this unit, students will plan and present the pros and cons of “fitting in” in the form of a debate.

I'm Nobody! Who are you?

AUTHOR	Name	Emily Dickinson
	Gender	Female
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1891
	Genre	Poetry
	Access Complex Text Features	<p>Genre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dickinson often ignored rules of poetry, rhyme, grammar, and punctuation. Point out that while the second stanza of this poem uses conventional <i>abcb</i> rhyme scheme, the first stanza uses half-rhyme (too, know). <p>Specific Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The definitions of “Nobody” (someone who is not important) and “Somebody” (someone who is important) as used in the poem may need to be explained. <p>Connection of Ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The images in Dickinson’s poems are often very ordinary. They reflect the simplicity of the everyday objects in her private world. However, she connects them via metaphor to unconventional or intense ideas. The poem uses mostly simple one- and two-syllable words. This simplicity makes every word important. It also draws attention to longer words, such as <i>advertise</i>.
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Lexile®	N/A
	Word Count	52
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Poetic Elements and Structure
	Close Read Prompt	<p>Poetry: Write a poem in which the speaker declares who he or she is: “I’m ____.” Structure your poem to include rhyme, rhythm, meter, and at least two stanzas. The poetic elements and structure should help show the speaker’s attitude toward the topic and contribute to the poem’s overall meaning.</p>
BEYOND THE BOOK	Beyond the Book Activity	<p>Writing: Real Identity vs. Social Media Identity</p> <p>In this poem, Emily Dickinson celebrates a private identity. Today, many people share a public identity on social media that may or may not match their private identity.</p> <p>Ask students to reflect on the following questions in writing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How would you describe your “true” identity? What do you value? Who do you enjoy spending time with? What is your day-to-day life like? Are you generally happy/sad/lonely/energized? <p>Next, have students compare their written reflections with what they’ve posted on social media. (Have students without social media accounts compare their reflections to what they generally share with others each day.)</p> <p>Then give them time to discuss the following questions with a small group of peers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do the images and updates posted to your social media accounts (or shared with others) accurately reflect you? Why might people create social media profiles that are strikingly different from their “real lives” and identities? How do you feel after scrolling through other people’s social media accounts? Why do you think you feel this way?
UNIT CONNECTION	Connect to Essential Question	In “I’m Nobody! Who are you?” by Emily Dickinson, privacy and personal identity are examined through lyric poetry. Although it’s a short poem, it leaves a lasting effect on the reader, who is left questioning, “What makes you, you?”
	Connect to Extended Writing Project	Students can use Emily Dickinson’s poem “I’m Nobody! Who are you?” as a resource when writing their literary analyses. Have them analyze and reflect on the poet’s use of figurative language.

Commencement Address to the Santa Fe Indian School

AUTHOR	Name	Michelle Obama
	Gender	Female
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	2016
	Genre	Informational
	Access Complex Text Features	<p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Santa Fe is in New Mexico, a state that contains a significant Native American population and is defined by Native American history, which includes confinement to reservations and an attempt in earlier decades to wipe out Native American culture. <p>Purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commencement addresses traditionally offer a personal take on how to be effective in life. As First Lady, Michelle Obama speaks in an official capacity. Her support for Native Americans and for their culture carries a special import. <p>Connection of Ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obama repeatedly emphasizes the importance of education. Her family endured many setbacks but never gave up on the goal of educating their children. The emphasis on education is appropriate to a commencement speech.
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Lexile®	1280
	Word Count	2,826
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Making Inferences, Arguments and Claims
	Close Read Prompt	Argumentative: Write a speech to be given at the end of the school year. Use the First Lady's speech as a template to help you focus on a major part of your life and its history thus far: your education, your family life, your greatest achievements, or a particular struggle you've faced. Use details from that experience to write a speech that attempts to inspire graduates who are about to embark on new journeys and overcome obstacles that may be problematic without such advice.
BEYOND THE BOOK	Beyond the Book Activity	<p>Writing: Digital Storytelling</p> <p>Ask students to create a digital story detailing their academic journey from kindergarten to their 8th grade commencement. Digital stories can combine text, images, videos, narration, and/or music.</p> <p>Digital stories should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify important people (family, friends, teachers) and their impact. Include important moments or events. Highlight challenges faced and lessons learned. State specific goals they have for the future. <p>Students can use an online video creator to design and publish their digital stories. Encourage students to share these digital stories with friends, family, and teachers.</p> <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What has had the biggest impact on you as a student? What is the biggest lesson you have learned in school?
UNIT CONNECTION	Connect to Essential Question	In a commencement address given at a small Native American high school in New Mexico, former First Lady Michelle Obama explores how her own family and experiences have helped turn her into the woman she is today. Likewise, she encourages the students to remain true to themselves and their values as they move forward.
	Connect to Extended Writing Project	Students can use Michelle Obama's "Commencement Address to the Santa Fe Indian School" as a resource when writing their literary analyses. Have them analyze Obama's use of language as they craft their own writing.

Curtain Call

AUTHOR	Name	Swin Cash
	Gender	Female
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	2016
	Genre	Informational
	Access Complex Text Features	<p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Swin Cash played for the Women’s National Basketball Association. Students may need to research this organization. The term “curtain call” is a theater term, meaning to take a bow after a performance. Cash uses it as a term for retirement. <p>Connection of Ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cash alludes to unions, discrimination, pay, and other aspects of playing professional basketball as a woman. Cash connects struggles to the importance of giving back to those who helped her succeed. Highlighting may help readers make connections. <p>Sentence Structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cash includes several one-sentence paragraphs. These are used for effect, or to draw attention to the emotions behind the statements, and readers may annotate to explain them.
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Lexile®	740
	Word Count	608
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	N/A
	Close Read Prompt	<p>Personal Response: Swin Cash says, “Basketball gave me the vehicle to inspire and empower.” Whom do you want to inspire and empower? Like Swin Cash, do you have a passion that allows you to inspire others or empower those who feel powerless? What is it? Reflect on your own thoughts, feelings, or dreams for the future as you respond to each of these questions.</p>
BEYOND THE BOOK	Beyond the Book Activity	<p>Speech: Your Legacy in 60 Seconds</p> <p>In her personal essay, Swin Cash reflects on her legacy. 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 legacy they want to create.</p> <p>Ask students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Think about the legacy they would like to leave behind. Prepare a 60-second elevator speech that clearly and concisely articulates their purpose in life and describes the legacy they want to leave behind. 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 your purpose in life? Why do so many people hope to leave a legacy after they retire? How might setting goals help you to eventually create a legacy?
UNIT CONNECTION	Connect to Essential Question	<p>In her short personal essay, “Curtain Call,” WNBA star Cash Swin discusses how her view of herself and others changes as she approaches the end of her career. How did the people and events of her past make her the successful woman she became?</p> <p>These two pieces together begin to question how much of who we are is a product of our history, and how much is a product of our choices. There is no single answer, but rather our identities are a complex mix. How do these differing lenses help readers think about their own identities?</p>
	Connect to Extended Writing Project	Students can find inspiration from “Curtain Call” when writing their literary analyses. Have them analyze and reflect on how Swin Cash uses basketball to explain ideas of belonging.

So where are you from?

AUTHOR	Name	Naomi Sepiso
	Gender	Female
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	2016
	Genre	Informational
	Access Complex Text Features	<p>Purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students may need assistance understanding that the author wishes that others could more fully understand her experiences. Immigrants have rich backgrounds and histories that deserve to be approached thoughtfully. <p>Genre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The text is an informational essay, but uses the third person. The use of the third person is a device that may help the author to express a feeling of alienation. However, the essay is rooted in her real-life experiences. <p>Connection of Ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> While the author focuses on her specific experiences as an immigrant in Australia, the text has universal implications. The author's personal experiences help to illuminate what many immigrants to other countries around the world experience.
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Lexile®	800
	Word Count	484
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Visualizing, Central or Main Idea
	Close Read Prompt	Informative: <i>Where are you from?</i> seems like a question with an obvious answer, but the answer is clearly more complicated according to the essay's author, Naomi Sepiso. How does Sepiso respond to this question? What supporting evidence does she include to develop her central or main idea? Be sure to use ideas and evidence from her essay to support your analysis.
BEYOND THE BOOK	Beyond the Book Activity	<p>Art: A Cinematic Self-Portrait</p> <p>In Naomi Sepiso's essay, she writes, "She was her own country, with her own history of civil wars, revolutions, healing and growth." Ask students to create a cinematic self-portrait designed to explore their 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 Social status Gender Family dynamics Belief systems <p>Students can use an online video creator tool to combine original photography and/or artwork with music to design a dynamic film exploring their individual identity.</p> <p>Once students have completed their films, they can share them with the class or post them online.</p>
UNIT CONNECTION	Connect to Essential Question	<p>How would you feel if someone asked you where you're from? How does that question create distance between the person asking and the person asked? In this essay, seventeen-year-old Naomi Sepiso discusses how a seemingly simple question makes her feel like she doesn't belong.</p> <p>In seventeen-year-old Naomi Sepiso's essay she discusses how she is her own person, and defining her as a product of the land of her parents makes her feel like she doesn't belong. How does putting someone in a box defined by their history hide who they really are?</p> <p>These two pieces together begin to question how much of who we are is a product of our history, and how much is a product of our choices. There is no single answer, but rather our identities are a complex mix. How do these differing lenses help readers think about their own identities?</p>
	Connect to Extended Writing Project	Students can find inspiration from "So where are you from?" when writing their literary analyses. Have them analyze and reflect on Naomi Sepiso's use of figurative language to explore identity.

The Outsiders

AUTHOR	Name	S.E. Hinton
	Gender	Female
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1967
	Genre	Fiction
	Access Complex Text Features	<p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The text is infused with the class conflict and cultural divides of the United States in the 1950s and 1960s. The characters label themselves based on their affiliations, and their differences are expressed in their lifestyles. <p>Connection of Ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The text connects the violence happening in a small Midwestern city to the violence happening at the same time in New York City. 1950s car culture and the gang conflicts described in the musical <i>West Side Story</i> provide further context. <p>Genre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students may benefit from considering the text as an excerpt. Since <i>The Outsiders</i> is a novel, it takes more time with moments over a longer narrative. The conversation between Ponyboy and Cherry is one example.
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Lexile®	660
	Word Count	1,060
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Character, Textual Evidence
	Close Read Prompt	<p>Literary Analysis: One theme of the novel <i>The Outsiders</i> has to do with the pressure to remain loyal to a group. Explain how interacting with Cherry has changed Ponyboy's understanding of similarities and differences between the Greasers and the Socs. How does his conversation with Cherry begin to change his overall character? Be sure to support your ideas with evidence from the text.</p>
BEYOND THE BOOK	Beyond the Book Activity	<p>Writing: Dally's Interior Monologue</p> <p>When Johnny returns beaten, Dally's response surprises Ponyboy. He says, "Dally had seen people killed on the streets of New York's West Side. Why did he look sick now?"</p> <p>Ask students to write Dally's interior monologue in this moment to reveal what he is thinking, feeling, and/or remembering that makes him look sick. An interior monologue is a literary device that allows the reader into a character's mind and can be written as a stream of consciousness, or a flow of thoughts.</p> <p>Once students have written their interior monologues, pair them up, and have them exchange papers. After reading each other's interior monologues ask them to discuss the similarities and differences between their pieces.</p> <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What details from the text helped you write this interior monologue? What was most challenging about getting inside Dally's mind?
UNIT CONNECTION	Connect to Essential Question	What happens when being part of a group defines who you are? In this selection from the classic novel <i>The Outsiders</i> , members of rival gangs begin to question how they see themselves and how they see each other.
	Connect to Extended Writing Project	Students can find inspiration from <i>The Outsiders</i> when writing their literary analyses. Have them reflect on S.E. Hinton's characterization of teens as they work to find a sense of belonging.

Slam, Dunk, & Hook

AUTHOR	Name	Yusef Komunyakaa
	Gender	Male
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1991
	Genre	Poetry
	Access Complex Text Features	<p>Genre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The poem is free verse. Students may need assistance understanding that a sentence may break over several lines. Highlighting single sentences that break over two or more lines may help students see the complete thoughts. Modeling may also help students understand how to read the poem. <p>Specific Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specialized vocabulary, such as <i>roundhouse</i> and <i>blackjack</i>, may challenge some readers. Remind students to use context clues while reading, and also to use a dictionary to define unfamiliar words. <p>Connection of Ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The poem is about the speaker’s love of basketball, but it also expresses larger ideas about life. Elevated language such as “hope & good intention,” “metaphysical,” and “beautiful & dangerous” help to convey the reality of the lives of the players.
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Lexile®	N/A
	Word Count	183
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Poetic Elements and Structure, Allusion
	Close Read Prompt	<p>Discussion: How is the identity of the speaker and other basketball players tied to the game of basketball? Discuss this question with a group of your peers. To prepare for your discussion, use the graphic organizer to identify the poet’s use of structure and allusions, and explain how they help communicate the game’s importance to the identity of individual players and the team as a whole. After your discussion, you will write a reflection in the space below.</p>
BEYOND THE BOOK	Beyond the Book Activity	<p>Writing: Larger Than Life</p> <p>In “Slam, Dunk, & Hook,” the speaker describes how playing basketball made him feel larger than life and helped him escape the difficult realities of his life.</p> <p>Ask students to reflect on the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What do you do that makes you feel larger than life? Do you feel it’s important to have an activity that helps you escape from your day-to-day life? Why or why not? <p>In three separate diary entries, students should reflect on specific moments in their lives when they engaged in a particular pastime, hobby, sport, or activity to escape from a challenging situation.</p> <p>Tell students that their diary entries should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include a date for each entry. Identify a situation, person, or problem that sometimes requires an escape. Describe a pastime, hobby, sport, or activity and how it makes them feel, using rich sensory details.
UNIT CONNECTION	Connect to Essential Question	How can you create a sense of belonging when you don’t feel welcome in your community? The poem draws on the experiences of poet Yusef Komunyakaa, who grew up as an African American in the 1950s in a small city in northeastern Louisiana.
	Connect to Extended Writing Project	Students can use “Slam, Dunk, & Hook” as a resource when writing their literary analyses. Have them analyze how Yusef Komunyakaa uses the game of basketball to explore identity.

Abuela Invents the Zero

AUTHOR	Name	Judith Ortiz Cofer
	Gender	Female
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1996
	Genre	Fiction
	Access Complex Text Features	<p>Purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Readers need to recognize that on the surface, the story appears to be humorous and entertaining, but actually is meant to teach a moral or lesson. <p>Organization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students need to recognize that the events in the story are not linear. The story starts with the ending, jumps back to the past, and then returns to that same beginning point later in the story. <p>Specific Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The story features Spanish words with which some readers may not be familiar. Point out that the use of Spanish helps identify the culture as well as the cultural friction between the narrator and her grandmother. Most of the time the author translates for readers, as when she writes, in the fourth paragraph, “<i>el Polo Norte</i>, as she calls New Jersey, the North Pole.” Sometimes, however, students will have to use context clues to figure out the meaning of certain Spanish words and phrases if they are not fluent in the language. For example, in the ninth paragraph, when her father says to Constanca, “The mass in Spanish is at ten sharp tomorrow morning, entiendes?”, students should take the question format as a clue that <i>entiendes</i> means <i>understand</i>.
	Lexile®	970
Word Count	1,583	
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Plot, Theme
	Close Read Prompt	Narrative: Write a letter that continues the story in which Constanca apologizes to Abuela and resolves the conflict between them. In your letter, include an example of Connie’s responses to a decision or incident. In connection to the story’s central idea or theme, explain what Connie has learned and how she has changed.
BEYOND THE BOOK	Beyond the Book Activity	<p>Photography: Nothing to Something Sometimes we may treat others as if they were nothing, or, as Connie treats her abuela, as if they were “zero.” To change this, have students do the following:</p> <p>Find or take a photograph of someone whom others might ignore, dismiss, or not always notice during the course of a busy day.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The photo may be of either someone you know or a stranger. The portrait may be in color or black and white. <p>Choose one type of brief caption to write to tell the story of the person in the photo.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A narrative describing the person and circumstances; or A monologue in the voice of the person. If you do an actual interview, use quotation marks. <p>Display the portraits and stories. To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What do the portraits and words make you think about? How might you look at strangers differently now?
	Connect to Essential Question	How can generational and cultural differences affect a family? In this short story, the main character learns a tough lesson about acceptance after she is rude to her grandmother, who is visiting from Puerto Rico.
UNIT CONNECTION	Connect to Extended Writing Project	Students can find inspiration from “Abuela Invents the Zero” when writing their literary analyses. Have them reflect on Judith Ortiz Cofer’s characterization of the narrator as she grapples with identity.

Inside Out and Back Again

AUTHOR	Name	Thanhha Lai
	Gender	Female
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	2011
	Genre	Fiction
	Access Complex Text Features	<p>Genre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thanhha Lai wrote this novel in the form of verse. Traditionally, poetry focuses on images and emotion, which may be why the author chose this form. <p>Connection of Ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The story of a child's assimilation to American culture is told in bursts of images, centered around going to a new school. Readers will need to connect the moments to follow the plot. Annotating may help readers make connections. <p>Sentence Structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lai uses a variety of structures, including dates as in a journal, stanzas, and one-sentence paragraphs in italics to indicate dialogue. Reading sections aloud, alone or in pairs, may help readers follow the events of the plot.
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Lexile®	N/A
	Word Count	521
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	N/A
	Close Read Prompt	<p>Personal Narrative: Hà doesn't know much English, so she describes her surroundings based on how she sees them. For example, she doesn't know what a hotdog is and describes it as "the pink sausage/ snuggled inside bread/ shaped like a corncob,/ smeared with sauces/ yellow and red." Choose a place from your own life—your classroom, the hallways, the library, your school's lunchroom—and describe it avoiding terms usually associated with the thing you describe. As you write your description, use the excerpt from <i>Inside Out and Back Again</i> as inspiration.</p>
BEYOND THE BOOK	Beyond the Book Activity	<p>Research Project: A Refugee's Perspective</p> <p>Ask students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Select a specific group of refugees to research. Research news articles, podcasts, and/or interviews to learn about their refugee experience. Find a refugee with an interesting story or perspective. Learn everything you can about that person and his/her experience. Write a series of first-person journal entries in verse that explore his/her experience as a refugee. Use your imagination to fill in missing details. <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What did you learn about the refugee experience that you did not know before writing these journals? What aspects of your journal entries were based on facts and which details did you have to invent?
UNIT CONNECTION	Connect to Essential Question	<p>How can moving to a new place change the way you see yourself? In the excerpt from <i>Inside Out and Back Again</i>, a novel written in verse, by Thanhha Lai, the main character adjusts to life in Alabama after moving to the United States from Vietnam.</p> <p>In a selection that, along with "Theories of Space and Time" and "The Road Not Taken" asks students how moving to a new place changes one's sense of self, the main character adjusts to life in a new place.</p> <p>Robert Frost's "The Road Not Taken" in which the speaker must make an important choice, is paired with two selections that echo this theme of entering new territory: the verse novel <i>Inside Out and Back Again</i> by Thanhha Lai, and the poem "Theories of Time and Space" by Natasha Trethewey. The selections converse with one another to explore the human process of making decisions and finding one's self in the world.</p>
	Connect to Extended Writing Project	<p>Students can use <i>Inside Out and Back Again</i> as a resource when writing their literary analyses. Have them reflect on Thanhha Lai's use of figurative language as the narrator seeks to belong in her new surroundings.</p>

Theories of Time and Space

AUTHOR	Name	Natasha Trethewey
	Gender	Female
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	2006
	Genre	Poetry
	Access Complex Text Features	<p>Genre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is a free verse poem, meaning there is no rhyme scheme or regular meter. The speaker directly addresses the reader in second person, so the reader must assume a role while reading. <p>Specific Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specialized vocabulary, such as <i>mangrove swamp</i> and riggings of shrimp boats, indicates geographical features of the Deep South around the Gulf of Mexico. The term mile markers relates to travel, which is key to the poem's themes. <p>Purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The poem is one in which the speaker gives advice to a reader. Highlighting and annotating may help readers follow the poet's purpose.
	Lexile®	N/A
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Word Count	121
	Skill Lessons	N/A
READER AND TASKS	Close Read Prompt	<p>Poetry: “Theories of Time and Space” seems to be about a journey, more specifically the speaker’s personal rules of the road. Imagine that you, like the speaker, go on a journey of your own. What do you see? What do you record in your “tome of memory”? Write a poem in any style to express your journey.</p>
	Beyond the Book Activity	<p>Writing: The Streets and Your Story</p> <p>Students will use a geographic location to inspire a poem about a specific moment in their lives.</p> <p>Ask students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Select a geographic location where you have a strong memory. Use an online map to zoom into this geographic location. Explore the details in the map and use them to inspire a poem that tells a story anchored in this geographic location. Incorporate street names and physical landmarks in your poem. Publish poems by sharing them in class or posting them online. <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How did using the online map help you remember details from this moment you may not have remembered? How did including details from the physical location impact your poem?
UNIT CONNECTION	Connect to Essential Question	<p>How do our experiences change our identity? Drawing on the experience of growing up biracial in Mississippi, poet Natasha Trethewey takes readers on a tour of her area of the American South in “Theories of Time and Space.” The speaker reflects on how the passage of time makes everything different from what came before.</p> <p>Further exploring how young female narrators find themselves in the world, in “Theories of Time and Space” the speaker reflects on how the passage of time makes everything different from what came before. “The Road Not Taken” and <i>Inside Out and Back Again</i> help students think about how our experiences change our identity.</p> <p>Robert Frost’s “The Road Not Taken” in which the speaker must make an important choice, is paired with two selections that echo this theme of entering new territory: the verse novel <i>Inside Out and Back Again</i> by Thanhà Lai, and the poem “Theories of Time and Space” by Natasha Trethewey. The selections converse with one another to explore the human process of making decisions and finding one’s self in the world.</p>
	Connect to Extended Writing Project	<p>Students can use the poem “Theories of Time and Space” as a resource when writing their literary analyses. Have them analyze how Natasha Trethewey explores travel through metaphor.</p>

The Road Not Taken

AUTHOR	Name	Robert Frost
	Gender	Male
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1915
	Genre	Poetry
	Access Complex Text Features	<p>Connection of Ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The poem is about a walk in the woods, but it addresses life issues. The way the speaker evaluates the roads and makes his choice relates to how people make choices throughout life. <p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some students may not be familiar with the types of woods and trails described in the poem. Explain that in some areas, people have access to forest preserves, and the preserves often contain many old trails. <p>Specific Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specialized vocabulary, such as trodden, may challenge some readers. Remind students to use context clues while reading, and also to use a dictionary to define unfamiliar words.
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Lexile®	N/A
	Word Count	144
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Poetic Elements and Structure, Figurative Language
	Close Read Prompt	<p>Poetry: Think about a time you had to make an important choice. Write a poem to show the journey and the risk involved in that experience, as well as how it changed you. Your poem may use regular rhyme and meter or be in free verse, may be humorous or serious, and should include figurative language to develop ideas. Include a final line that states the poem’s meaning as it relates to your speaker and the events.</p>
BEYOND THE BOOK	Beyond the Book Activity	<p>Reflection: Life Choices</p> <p>Ask students to write a journal entry about a moment in their lives when they were given a choice between two different roads, or life choices. Have them reflect on the possible outcome if they had made a different choice in that moment.</p> <p>In their journal entries, have students respond to the following::</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain the situation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What choice were you presented with? Which choice felt more like the “road less traveled”? Which choice felt more comfortable or familiar? How did you decide which road to take? Thinking back, did you make the right choice? What might have happened if you had selected the other road?
UNIT CONNECTION	Connect to Essential Question	<p>How can your decisions affect how you feel about yourself and your life? In this classic poem, “The Road Not Taken” by Robert Frost, the speaker has to choose between two roads as he takes a walk through the woods. The speaker leads readers through his thought process and reflections on how his choice affects the rest of his life.</p> <p>Robert Frost’s “The Road Not Taken” in which the speaker must make an important choice, is paired with two selections that echo this theme of entering new territory: the verse novel <i>Inside Out and Back Again</i> by Thanhha Lai, and the poem “Theories of Time and Space” by Natasha Trethewey. The selections converse with one another to explore the human process of making decisions and finding one’s self in the world.</p>
	Connect to Extended Writing Project	Students can find inspiration in the poem “The Road Not Taken” when writing their informational essays. Have students reflect on Robert Frost’s themes related to risk, reward, and loss.

The House on Mango Street

AUTHOR	Name	Sandra Cisneros
	Gender	Female
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1984
	Genre	Fiction
	Access Complex Text Features	<p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sandra Cisneros was born in Chicago. Her father was Mexican and her mother was Mexican-American. Her experiences as a Chicana (Mexican-American) caught between two cultures influenced her depiction of the main character in this novel. <p>Sentence Structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The novel is organized as a series of vignettes—short descriptive scenes. Each vignette has a title and is a self-contained story. Have students identify the three scenes that are included in this excerpt. <p>Connection of Ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cisneros uses a poetic style exemplified by imagery and figurative language. Students may need guidance understanding the metaphors and similes, how the figurative language draws the reader into the story, and how it contributes to the theme.
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Lexile®	850
	Word Count	950
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Figurative Language, Summarizing
	Close Read Prompt	Argumentative: Esperanza faces several internal and external struggles. Overall, what are Esperanza’s biggest challenges? Summarize the challenges Esperanza faces in each section of the text, and explain how figurative language is used to convey those challenges. Be sure to support your ideas with evidence from the text.
BEYOND THE BOOK	Beyond the Book Activity	<p>Art: Ideal Home or The Story of Your Name Ask students to select and complete one of the two assignments below.</p> <p>Describe in minute detail your “ideal” home.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What would it look like inside and out? What color would it be? How many rooms would it have? How would you feel in this home? <p>Draw a picture or cut out images from magazines to create a collage of this ideal home.</p> <p>Tell the story of your name.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What does your name mean? What inspired your name? Were you named after anyone? <p>Draw an artistic representation of your name in which each letter of your name is an object or image that represents part of your personality or identity.</p> <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why did you choose the assignment you completed? What attracted you to it over the other option? What does your “ideal” home or the story behind your name reveal about your identity? Is there any connection?
UNIT CONNECTION	Connect to Essential Question	In this excerpt from the novel <i>The House on Mango Street</i> by Sandra Cisneros, the young narrator struggles to define herself when she feels challenged by her surroundings and longs for a house that would always belong to her family.
	Connect to Extended Writing Project	Students can use the novel <i>The House on Mango Street</i> as a resource when writing their literary analyses. Have them analyze how Sandra Cisneros uses the metaphor of a house to explore belonging.

TEXT COMPLEXITY

UNIT 3: NO RISK, NO REWARD

Unit Title: No Risk, No Reward

Essential Question: Why do we take chances?

Genre Focus: Informational Text

Overview

Why do we take chances? Every time a person takes a chance, he or she risks losing something for the possibility of a reward. Sometimes these chances pay off, and sometimes they don't. Yet, people still take risks every day. With a genre focus on informational texts, this Grade 8 unit prepares students to explore questions about why we take chances.

Informational authors explore risk-taking from a variety of viewpoints. Walter Lord takes a historical approach to the topic, sharing accounts of real events with surprising outcomes that still affect audiences today. Anya Groner and Nina Gregory look at contemporary risk-takers who search for solutions in the face of environmental challenges. Frederick Douglass explains risks he had to take in order to improve his own life as an enslaved person in the time before the Civil War. President Ronald Reagan shares his perspective after a shocking national tragedy. Fiction author Jack London as well as poets Langston Hughes and Frances Ellen Watkins Harper explore how taking risks is necessary to living a full life.

After reading about these ideas within and across genres, your students will write an informative essay, applying what they have learned from the unit's literature, speeches, and informational texts to an informative writing project.

Text Complexity

In Grade 8, Unit 3 students pivot away from narrative texts and look more closely at informational writing. Although the genre focus of this unit is informational texts, students will also have the opportunity to read a handful of poems and an excerpt from a novel. The selections in this unit fall in a Lexile band of 780-1160, with most texts residing in the 950-1050 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 eighth graders, encouraging them to dig deeper as readers by engaging with texts of varying difficulty.

For the purposes of Comparing Within and Across Genres, we have grouped a selection from the novel *A Night to Remember* and “Address to the Nation on the Explosion of the Space Shuttle *Challenger*.” Both texts are topically linked in that they are about tragedies and are also in the same, middle range Lexile for the unit. Some students may struggle with specialized vocabulary or a lack of prior knowledge about the events detailed in these texts. These potential difficulties are offset by skills lessons in summarizing and informational text structure, and should equip students with the ability to compare and contrast how informational texts explore related events and ideas.

Throughout this unit, students will encounter informational texts in the same Lexile and difficulty bands. In addition to their shared genre, they also share a thematic link, a focus on taking risks to reap rewards. These texts will challenge students to consider different formats and genres, as well as lessons essential to analyzing informational texts such as technical language, Greek and Latin affixes and roots, and word patterns and relationships. In “The Vanishing Island” and “A Kenyan Teen’s Discovery: Let There Be Lights to Save Lions,” students will use skills learned in previous units to decipher unfamiliar vocabulary and concepts. Similar levels of difficulty in these selections will allow students to develop skills to access a variety of texts throughout this unit.

Two poems, “Mother to Son” and “Learning to Read,” and an excerpt from *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave* are grouped for Comparison Within and Across Genres. These selections offer students an opportunity to compare and contrast accounts of risks taken by African Americans across the span of two centuries. Although students will have already encountered the free verse form used in “Mother to Son” and “Learning to Read” in earlier units, both selections contain heavy use of metaphor, biblical allusions and punctuation which may prove challenging. A skills lesson on adjusting for fluency will help students work through these texts. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave* is one of the highest level texts in the unit and is made accessible through a variety of lessons and resources. Aside from the topical connection to the other two texts, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave* is supported by a StudySync TV episode and skill lessons on informational text elements and figurative language.

The texts in this unit will allow students to continue throughout the year with the skills to analyze both informational texts and other more common genres.

English Language Learner Resources

Lessons in the English Language Learner Resources section offer explicit ELL 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 History of the Space Shuttle” and “Narrative of the Life of Ada Lee, an American Farm Girl,” 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 “Address to the Nation on the Explosion of the Space Shuttle Challenger” and *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*.

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 risks people have taken and why they chose to take them, students will complete an Extended Oral Project which can be used in place of or as an extension to the Extended Writing Project. In this unit, students will plan and present advice for risk-takers in the form of an informative presentation.

The Vanishing Island

AUTHOR	Name	Anya Groner
	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 be unfamiliar with environmental and geological changes that cause massive land erosion. References to historical events, such as the Indian Removal Act and the Trail of Tears, as well as references to French influence on Louisiana culture, may need explaining. <p>Connection of Ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This article interweaves information involving Louisiana geology, political and social history, the culture and lives of Native Americans, and historical events in a long and complex narrative, and the narration moves back and forth in time. Students may need support as the topics and time periods shift. <p>Specific Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students may be unfamiliar with domain-specific vocabulary, such as <i>anhingas</i>, <i>arsenic</i>, and <i>palmetto(s)</i>, as well as French words, such as <i>bousillage</i>. Using Greek and Latin roots, as well as a dictionary, can help students with words such as <i>biannual</i>.
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Lexile®	1000
	Word Count	5,780
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Evaluating Details, Greek and Latin Affixes and Roots, Media
	Close Read Prompt	Informative: Based on the information in the article, what makes people care so deeply about this “vanishing island” that nothing can induce them to leave? Why do people still continue to inhabit it and work so hard for its cultural survival? Use evidence from the text, including different media, to support your understanding of the reading.
BEYOND THE BOOK	Beyond the Book Activity	<p>Research Project: Rising Waters</p> <p>Isle de Jean Charles is one community being impacted by rising sea levels, but there are many more communities in danger. Break students into small groups and ask them to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify another coastal community or island being impacted by rising sea levels. Research the impact of rising sea levels on the geographic location, people’s lifestyle and customs, access to services (e.g., hospitals and schools), food sources, and work. Explore how the community they selected is dealing with their changing environment. Create a multimedia presentation to present their research to the class. Present their findings in a formal group presentation. <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What similarities did you notice about the different locations and the impact of rising sea levels? How are communities dealing with these changes? What creative solutions are people developing to address rising sea levels? Many locations in the United States (e.g., New Orleans, San Francisco, Miami, Manhattan) are extremely vulnerable to rising sea levels. How can highly populated cities deal with this threat?
UNIT CONNECTION	Connect to Essential Question	Why would a group of people stay in a dangerous location? In this informational text, author Anya Groner describes the struggle faced by the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Native American tribe as their homeland vanishes into the surrounding water.
	Connect to Extended Writing Project	Students can use “The Vanishing Island” as a resource when writing their informational essays. Have students analyze Anya Groner’s use of details to help them in their own writing.

A Night to Remember

AUTHOR	Name	Walter Lord
	Gender	Male
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1955
	Genre	Informational
	Access Complex Text Features	<p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students may not know the significance of the <i>Titanic</i>. There were over 2,000 passengers—who were organized by class, or type of ticket—and crew members. There were too few lifeboats, and a passenger’s gender and class of ticket affected who survived. <p>Organization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The text retells one event from the points of view of several passengers and crew members. Students may need help tracking the shifts in point of view as they read the text.
		<p>Specific Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nautical terms, such as <i>knots</i>, <i>bow</i>, <i>starboard</i>, and <i>stern</i>, may present a challenge to some readers. Remind students to use a dictionary to define unfamiliar words.
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Lexile®	1050
	Word Count	1,147
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	N/A
	Close Read Prompt	Personal Response: How do the reactions of the <i>Titanic</i> passengers affect your feelings, such as sympathy, about the collision? How does reading these personal reactions help you better understand what happened? Be sure to use evidence to support your response.
BEYOND THE BOOK	Beyond the Book Activity	<p>Art: A Google Doodle Tribute to the <i>Titanic</i></p> <p>Students will design a Google Doodle to be displayed on April 14 to remember the <i>Titanic</i>. Students should include details from <i>A Night to Remember</i> in their Google Doodle. They can create pieces of artwork with moveable parts to demonstrate how it should be animated or use an online design tool to create their Google Doodle.</p>
UNIT CONNECTION	Connect to Essential Question	The passengers and crew were eager to cross the Atlantic on the maiden voyage of the reportedly unsinkable <i>Titanic</i> in 1912. The risks involved in such a voyage became suddenly clear when the ship struck an iceberg. In this informational text, Walter Lord shares the recollections of several survivors.
	Connect to Extended Writing Project	Students can use <i>A Night to Remember</i> as a resource when writing their informational essays. Have students use Walter Lord’s style of reporting the events as an inspiration for their own writing.

Address to the Nation on the Explosion of the Space Shuttle Challenger

AUTHOR	Name	Ronald Reagan
	Gender	Male
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1986
	Genre	Informational
	Access Complex Text Features	<p>Genre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The text is a speech, a public statement meant to be heard and seen. A speech reflects the speaker's point of view. In the speech, President Reagan uses the pronoun "we" to indicate not only himself and the First Lady, but also all Americans. <p>Purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The speech contains a eulogy, or memorial speech, of the astronauts who died, as well as reassurances to the nation's children. One role of the president is to speak to the nation in times of crisis or tragedy. <p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students may not be familiar with NASA and the U.S. space program, from the first flights to the space shuttle missions. Reagan ends his speech with a quote from John Gillespie Magee, Jr., a pilot who was killed during a flight in 1941.
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Lexile®	780
	Word Count	651
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Summarizing, Informational Text Structure
	Close Read Prompt	<p>Compare and Contrast: In "Address to the Nation on the Explosion of the Space Shuttle Challenger," President Reagan addresses the public about a national tragedy. In <i>A Night to Remember</i>, the tragedy is recounted through interviews with various people who experienced the Titanic's crash. How do the different structures of the text help to effectively communicate information regarding these tragedies? Are there advantages or disadvantages to the structure of either text? Which one do you prefer? Cite specific examples from the text to explain which structure better helps to effectively communicate information and makes the author's point.</p>
BEYOND THE BOOK	Beyond the Book Activity	<p>Writing: Obituaries for Challenger Astronauts</p> <p>Break students into seven groups and give each group the name of one of the people who died in the 1986 <i>Challenger</i> explosion: Michael Smith, Dick Scobee, Judith Resnik, Ronald McNair, Ellison Onizuka, Gregory Jarvis, or Christa McAuliffe.</p> <p>Ask students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research the person's life to learn about his/her family, work, and accomplishments. Read examples of obituaries in the local paper or online. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How long is the average obituary? What types of details and information do obituaries contain about people who have died? Write an obituary announcing the astronaut's death and celebrating his/her life and accomplishments. <p>Allow each group to read their obituary for the class. Then discuss the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What did these individuals have in common? After learning more about them, how does this change the way you think about the 1986 <i>Challenger</i> explosion?
UNIT CONNECTION	Connect to Essential Question	What happens when a big risk has a negative outcome? In the wake of the <i>Challenger</i> explosion, President Ronald Reagan speaks to a shocked and grieving nation about the crew who gave their lives for science and why space exploration is worth the risk.
	Connect to Extended Writing Project	Students can use "Address to the Nation on the Explosion of the Space Shuttle <i>Challenger</i> " as a resource when writing their informational essays. Students may consider ways to structure their own writing.

A Kenyan Teen’s Discovery: Let There Be Lights to Save Lions

AUTHOR	Name	Nina Gregory
	Gender	Female
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	2013
	Genre	Informational
	Access Complex Text Features	<p>Connection of Ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Readers synthesize information from the video and article to better understand the importance of Richard’s invention. <p>Purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The text is from a news source, and it gives information about a real person and real events. The author’s purpose is to explain how Richard got his idea and invented his Lion Lights. <p>Organization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The text shows cause-and-effect. The cause is the conflict between humans and lions. The effect is Richard’s invention. Clues such as “from ages 6 to 9” and “one night” show chronological order.
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Lexile®	950
	Word Count	502
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Synthesizing, Media, Word Patterns and Relationships
	Close Read Prompt	Informative: How do the video and the text work together to introduce and explain the impact of Richard Turer’s invention? What are the advantages and disadvantages of using these different mediums in the article? Cite evidence from both the text and the video in your response.
BEYOND THE BOOK	Beyond the Book Activity	<p>Infographic: Man vs. Nature</p> <p>Conflicts between people and nature are increasing as humans infringe on land that has belonged to other animals. Students will select another example of this conflict between human beings and animals to research. They will transform this research into a dynamic infographic designed to raise awareness about this man vs. nature conflict.</p> <p>Ask students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clearly identify the conflict between humans and animals they want to research. Research this conflict to find out more about it. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where is this conflict taking place? What is causing the conflict? In what way are humans and/or animals threatened? What damage has already been done? What are possible solutions to this conflict? Design an infographic that identifies the conflict and location, provides visual data to show the impact of the conflict, and communicates a clear call to action. Infographics can be done on paper or online. <p>Once students have posted their infographics in class or online, allow students to do a gallery walk to see what their peers have created.</p> <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What types of visual data (e.g., maps, tables, charts) do you think were most effective in communicating information? Which infographics were most surprising? What made them stand out?
UNIT CONNECTION	Connect to Essential Question	What happens when protecting one group of animals puts another group of animals at risk? This informational text and video show how Richard Turer drew inspiration from this problem.
	Connect to Extended Writing Project	Students can use “A Kenyan Teen’s Discovery: Let There Be Lights to Save Lions” as a mentor text for their Extended Writing Project. They may use the text as a resource for their informational essays.

Mother to Son

AUTHOR	Name	Langston Hughes
	Gender	Male
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1922
	Genre	Poetry
	Access Complex Text Features	<p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students should know that Hughes was an African-American poet associated with the Harlem Renaissance, an arts movement during the 1920s that sought to express African Americans' experiences. <p>Sentence Structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sentences written in dialect may challenge readers. Several lines do not follow the rules of standard grammar (e.g., ain't been no) and may include contractions such as I'se and other words spelled as they would be pronounced by the speaker, such as kinder. Students may need guidance following the author's free verse style, including his use of punctuation (e.g., colon, dashes) to connect and emphasize ideas in the lines of the poem. <p>Connection of Ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding the poem's extended metaphor, which compares life to a staircase, is key to determining the theme.
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Lexile®	N/A
	Word Count	99
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Adjusting Fluency
	Close Read Prompt	<p>Personal Response: The mother of the poem's title shows sympathy for her son, but she does not let him dwell on defeat. What did you think about the mother's advice in "Mother to Son"? What kind of advice have you received from an adult in your life? What kind of a metaphor could you use to share the advice with a friend?</p>
BEYOND THE BOOK	Beyond the Book Activity	<p>Art: Visual Metaphor for Life</p> <p>Langston Hughes's poem "Mother to Son" compares life to a staircase to teach about perseverance. Students will create their own visual metaphors about life to teach an important life lesson.</p> <p>Ask students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Imagine you are going to give a younger sibling, family member, or friend advice about life. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the most important lesson you have learned? What piece of advice would you want to give someone you care about? As Hughes does in his poem, select an object that can be used to represent life's ups and downs. Create a visual metaphor using the artistic medium of your choice (e.g., papier-mâché, clay, paint) to reveal this life lesson. Write a 20-line poem that articulates this life lesson and weaves in details from your visual metaphor. <p>Host a gallery walk for parents and student to show off the students' artwork and poems.</p> <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How did you decide what metaphor to use? Did creating the visual metaphor make the poem easier to write?
UNIT CONNECTION	Connect to Essential Question	<p>Read with the poem "Learning to Read" and <i>Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave</i>, Langston Hughes's classic poem "Mother to Son" invites students to compare and contrast the risks taken by African Americans. In the poem, a mother relates advice on life through the extended metaphor of a staircase.</p> <p>Together, "Mother to Son," "Learning to Read," and <i>Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave</i> offer students an opportunity to compare and contrast accounts of risks taken by African Americans, shared in poetry and in memoir, spanning two centuries.</p>
	Connect to Extended Writing Project	Students can find inspiration from the poem "Mother to Son" when writing their informational essays. Have students relate Langston Hughes's metaphor to the challenges real people may face.

Learning to Read

AUTHOR	Name	Frances Ellen Watkins Harper
	Gender	Female
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1854
	Genre	Poetry
	Access Complex Text Features	<p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The poem is set in the South during the Civil War. Students may be unfamiliar with the history of slavery in America. It is especially important for students to understand that enslaved people were forbidden from reading by slaveholders. <p>Specific Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Terms related to the Civil War era—such as Rebs and Yankees—may challenge readers. Remind students to use context clues or a reference work to learn the meaning of unfamiliar terms. Some dialect or expressions of the time may need explanation.
		<p>Connection of Ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some readers may not immediately connect the poem’s allusions to the Bible. Direct students who have trouble explaining the connections between <i>Bible</i>, <i>hymns</i>, and <i>Testament</i> to a relevant reference source.
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Lexile®	N/A
	Word Count	258
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	N/A
	Close Read Prompt	Discussion: It’s often said that “knowledge is power.” The speaker of the poem presents the reason enslaved people were not allowed to learn to read: “Knowledge didn’t agree with slavery— / ’Twould make us all too wise.” Discuss these ideas and your response to the poem.
BEYOND THE BOOK	Beyond the Book Activity	<p>Analysis: Rap as Modern Day Protest Poetry</p> <p>Frances Ellen Watkins Harper is credited with establishing the tradition of African-American protest poetry. This poetry was designed to shine a light on the struggles and inequalities that African Americans face in society. Similarly, modern day rap continues to emphasize the inequalities between races and in socioeconomic status in America.</p> <p>Ask students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Select a rap song that they believe is a modern example of protest poetry. [Note: Teachers can provide a list of songs to ensure the language is appropriate.] Analyze the lyrics of the song to identify the specific racial and socioeconomic inequalities identified in this song. Think about the following questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What specific inequalities does the artist identify in this song? What is causing these inequalities? What does the artist say the impact of these inequalities are on African Americans? How can these inequalities be corrected? Why do you think this song qualifies as “protest poetry”? <p>Once students have selected their song and written an analytical paragraph, put them into small groups to discuss the songs they selected and why they believe they are examples of modern day protest poetry. They should use the questions above to guide their conversation.</p>
		<p>In her poem “Learning to Read,” poet Frances Ellen Watkins Harper uses biblical allusions and details of life after the Civil War to recount the joys and complications of education. Along with “Mother to Son” and <i>Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave</i> students will continue to explore the African American experience through this text.</p> <p>Together, “Mother to Son,” “Learning to Read,” and <i>Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave</i> offer students an opportunity to compare and contrast accounts of risks taken by African Americans, shared in poetry and in memoir, spanning two centuries.</p>
UNIT CONNECTION	Connect to Essential Question	<p>In her poem “Learning to Read,” poet Frances Ellen Watkins Harper uses biblical allusions and details of life after the Civil War to recount the joys and complications of education. Along with “Mother to Son” and <i>Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave</i> students will continue to explore the African American experience through this text.</p> <p>Together, “Mother to Son,” “Learning to Read,” and <i>Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave</i> offer students an opportunity to compare and contrast accounts of risks taken by African Americans, shared in poetry and in memoir, spanning two centuries.</p>
	Connect to Extended Writing Project	Students can find inspiration from the poem “Learning to Read” when writing their informational essays. Have students reflect on Frances Ellen Watkins Harper’s details about risk-taking and reward.

Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave

AUTHOR	Name	Frederick Douglass
	Gender	Male
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1845
	Genre	Informational
	Access Complex Text Features	<p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frederick Douglass was born into slavery around 1820. He escaped and became a notable writer and abolitionist. Douglass alludes to the speeches of Richard Brinsley Sheridan, who argued for the freedom of the Irish from British rule. <p>Sentence Structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The language in the selection is complex. Douglass uses long sentences with many clauses. Students may benefit from breaking these long sentences into smaller parts. <p>Genre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave is a memoir that tells of the author's experiences. Remind students that the selection is part of a longer work. Douglass uses first-person point of view to tell his story.
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Lexile®	1010
	Word Count	945
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Informational Text Elements, Figurative Language
	Close Read Prompt	<p>Compare and Contrast: The speakers of the poems “Mother to Son” and “Learning to Read,” and Frederick Douglass in his autobiography, describe the risks involved to make successes of their lives. While Douglass’s autobiography uses informational text elements to convey his experience, all three texts send a message about the importance of education. Think about the use of language, descriptions, and events, and explain how they contribute to this message.</p>
BEYOND THE BOOK	Beyond the Book Activity	<p>Writing: Changing the Face of American Currency Imagine that the United States Treasury is planning to change the face on the \$20 bill. Students will need to write an argumentative paragraph making a strong case for putting Frederick Douglass on the American bill.</p> <p>Ask students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research Frederick Douglass’s life and achievements to gather relevant information to use in their argumentative paragraph. Write a clear claim stating why they believe Frederick Douglass should appear on the \$20 bill, and support that claim with credible evidence collected during their research and thoughtful analysis. Include citations for all of the resources they included in their paragraph. <p>Pair up students so they can provide one another with peer edits on their paragraphs.</p> <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How would changing the faces that appear on our currency impact our national identity? What do the images on our currency reveal about our country and its history?
UNIT CONNECTION	Connect to Essential Question	<p>In the powerful memoir <i>Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave</i>, Douglass recounts how it was he came to learn to read and write, the risks involved, and the powerful impact this learning had on his life.</p> <p>Together, “Mother to Son,” “Learning to Read,” and <i>Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave</i> offer students an opportunity to compare and contrast accounts of risks taken by African Americans, shared in poetry and in memoir, spanning two centuries.</p>
	Connect to Extended Writing Project	Students can use <i>Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave</i> as a resource when writing their informational essays. Have students analyze the impact of Douglass’s personal risk.

The Day I Saved a Life

AUTHOR	Name	Thomas Ponce
	Gender	Male
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	2008
	Genre	Informational
	Access Complex Text Features	<p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The text refers to biological concepts such as the ocean ecosystem and the shark's role in it as a predator. Explain that sharks are generally at the top of a food chain, although killer whales have been known to prey on them. Because sharks are major predators, they keep the populations of the species they prey on in check. <p>Specific Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Higher-level vocabulary, such as <i>inhumane</i> (without humanity, compassion, or kindness) and technical language such as <i>vivisection</i> (operating on a live animal for scientific research) may need defining. Students will have focused skill lessons on using context clues and determining the meaning of technical language after the First Read.
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Lexile®	990
	Word Count	1,082
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Context Clues, Technical Language
	Close Read Prompt	Argumentative: Using Ponce's essay as a point of reference, write a persuasive essay where you defend a subject about which you are passionate. Be sure to include technical language where applicable, as this can lend authority to your opinions and ideas.
BEYOND THE BOOK	Beyond the Book Activity	<p>Research: Going Vegan</p> <p>In his essay, Thomas Ponce says that he is vegan. Have your students conduct research about what it means to be vegan. Veganism can be a broad subject, so consider having students choose one of the following as a basis for their research:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Following a vegan, or plant-based diet, that abstains from all animal products (meat, fish, dairy, honey, etc.) because of animal rights. Being vegan because you're an environmental advocate. Eating a vegan diet for health reasons. Promoting veganism in different aspects of life (vegan cosmetics, accessories, clothes, etc.) as a stand against animal cruelty. <p>Have students present their research. In addition, you may also choose to have your students give their opinions about adopting a vegan lifestyle. Their opinions may accompany their research in order to have a classroom discussion or debate.</p> <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why do people choose to be vegan? What effects can veganism have on the world? Do you think veganism will continue to gain in popularity? Why or why not?
	UNIT CONNECTION	Connect to Essential Question
Connect to Extended Writing Project		Students can find inspiration from "The Day I Saved a Life" when doing their informative writing on risk-taking. Have them reflect on Thomas Ponce's decision to take action about sharks.

The Call of the Wild

AUTHOR	Name	Jack London
	Gender	Male
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1903
	Genre	Fiction
	Access Complex Text Features	<p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students unfamiliar with Alaska and snowy climates may struggle to visualize the setting. Students who have never seen a dogsled may not understand the significance of the dogs not getting along with one another. <p>Sentence Structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The combination of compound sentences and complex sentences in some paragraphs will challenge students. Visualizing the actions may help students understand what is being described in compound sentences and complex sentences. <p>Organization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students may find it confusing that the viewpoints of the dogs are included in places. The description of various incidents among the dogs may cause students to struggle with tracking the chronology of events.
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Lexile®	1160
	Word Count	759
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Language, Style, and Audience, Media
	Close Read Prompt	<p>Literary Analysis: In the final paragraph, Jack London writes, “such is the paradox of living, this ecstasy comes when one is most alive, and it comes as a complete forgetfulness that one is alive.” Based on his language, what sort of response was he likely looking for from his audience? Is there a difference in the impact of the text and the impact of the video? Which medium is more powerful and effective? Use textual evidence as well as references from the video to support your response.</p>
BEYOND THE BOOK	Beyond the Book Activity	<p>Write a Scene: If Animals Could Talk</p> <p>Taking inspiration from the dogs in <i>The Call of the Wild</i>, write a scene from an animal’s point of view. In the scene, the animal should have dialogue with a human so that true feelings can be expressed. Think of situations in which animals might want to communicate with humans, such as the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A goldfish needs the water in his bowl changed. A puppy at an adoption center wants people to know he will be a great pet. A service animal needs a vacation and doesn’t know how to let her owner know. <p>After writing their short scenes, have students read each other’s. They may also act them out.</p> <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What can we do to make sure the animals in our lives are respected? How might you look at animals differently now?
UNIT CONNECTION	Connect to Essential Question	In Jack London’s classic novel <i>The Call of the Wild</i> , the sled dog Buck stirs up a rebellion when he risks standing up to the aggressive alpha dog, Spitz.
	Connect to Extended Writing Project	Students can find inspiration from <i>The Call of the Wild</i> when writing their literary analyses. Have them reflect on Jack London’s characterization of Buck as he takes chances.

Cocoon

AUTHOR	Name	Mahvash Sabet
	Gender	Female
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	2013
	Genre	Poetry
	Access Complex Text Features	<p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some students may be unfamiliar with the Bahá'í faith, a religion that teaches the essential worth of all religions, and the unity and equality of all people. Established in 1863, it initially grew in Iran and parts of the Middle East, where it has faced ongoing persecution since its inception. <p>Specific Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difficult vocabulary, such as <i>cowering</i> (to crouch, or kneel-down with the upper body brought forward, usually in fear), <i>pinning</i> (suffering because of a broken heart), and <i>demise</i> (a person or thing's death), may need to be explained. Remind students to use context clues while reading, and to use a dictionary to define any unfamiliar words.
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Lexile®	N/A
	Word Count	132
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Connotation and Denotation
	Close Read Prompt	<p>Literary Analysis: In this poem, Mahvash Sabet describes the conflicting emotions she feels when she is arrested in her home and watches as it is destroyed. She then reflects on why she should feel torn between desiring freedom and wanting the security she once had. Some of the words she chooses to describe her feelings have powerful connotations that help her to describe her experience. Write an analysis in which you explain Sabet's purpose for telling this story about her personal experience. Use textual evidence to support your response, including the author's use of connotation and denotation.</p>
BEYOND THE BOOK	Beyond the Book Activity	<p>Photography: Risk Takers</p> <p>Taking a risk can mean many things to many different people. For Mahvash Sabet, it meant confronting her fears about freedom. To explore the concept of “taking a risk,” have students do the following:</p> <p>Find a photograph in a magazine or online that they feel shows someone taking a risk. It might be an Olympic champion, or someone who pushes themselves to achieve some goal.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The photo may be of someone famous, someone not many people know about, or someone only they know. The portrait may be in color or black and white. <p>Choose one type of brief caption to write that tells the story of the person in the photo.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A narrative describing the person and circumstances Why they think this person is taking a risk. <p>Display the portraits and stories. To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What do the portraits and captions make you think about? How might you look at the concept of taking a risk in a new way?
	UNIT CONNECTION	Connect to Essential Question
Connect to Extended Writing Project		Students can find inspiration from “Cocoon” when writing their informative essays. Have them reflect on the denotations and connotations of words when describing the risks that some people take, why they take them, and the outcomes.

TEXT COMPLEXITY

UNIT 4: HEAR ME OUT

Unit Title: Hear Me Out

Essential Question: How do you choose the right words?

Genre Focus: Argumentative Text

Overview

Intrigue. Uproar. Inspiration. Hilarity. Heartbreak. Choosing the right words can have a strong effect on an audience. But how do you know which words are the right words? With a genre focus on argumentative texts, this Grade 8 unit prepares students to explore questions about how authors choose the right words.

Some of history's greatest wordsmiths are represented in this unit. Iconic speeches by Abraham Lincoln and Sojourner Truth show students how the right words can inspire and challenge a diverse audience. An excerpt from Mark Twain's classic novel *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* shows how the right words can yield results. Cornelia Hancock's "Letters of a Civil War Nurse" shows how the right words can capture the grief of a nation at war.

Other selections help students understand that choosing the right words is still important today. The graphic fantasy story "HUG" offers of a surprising take on the sharing of bad news. The Point/Counterpoint article on gaming challenges students to consider how online behavior affects communication skills. Tim Schafer's "Cover Letter to LucasArts" is an example of how using the right words can showcase a writer's unique skills and personality.

After reading about these ideas within and across genres, your students will write an argumentative letter, applying what they have learned from the unit's literature, speeches, and informational texts to an argumentative writing project.

Text Complexity

In Grade 8 Unit 4 students will continue reading texts with a genre emphasis on informational texts. Throughout this unit students will be reminded of earlier skills, through reading many fiction selections, while also improving their ability to analyze several argumentative and informational texts. The selections in this unit fall in a Lexile band of 780-1250, with most texts residing in the 910-1120 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 eighth graders, encouraging them to think more broadly as learners by engaging with texts of varying difficulty.

Unit 4 begins with a unique text that will challenge and intrigue students. “/HUG” is a graphic short story that will introduce students to the theme of the unit: hear me out. Blending gaming culture and the graphic novel form, a skills lesson in setting and how it influences the values and beliefs of characters will help students think critically about what may be a new genre of fiction to many. Related in topic to “/HUG” is the point/counterpoint set of essays “Gaming Communities.” Though at the slightly higher end of the Lexile range, the information in this text is presented in a linear format and serves as a grade-appropriate text for students to learn the basics of argumentative writing analysis. Skill lessons in arguments and claims, reasons and evidence, and logical fallacies will not only help students through “Gaming Communities,” it will prepare them to access more difficult argumentative texts later in the unit.

Two texts have been selected for Comparison Within and Across Genres: “Denee Benton: Broadway Princess” and Tim Schafer’s “Cover Letter to LucasArts.” Though one is an informational text and the other is a visual cover letter, both of these texts will challenge students to think about argumentative strategies and the ways in which people stop at nothing to achieve their dreams. These texts will be read alongside skill lessons in technical language, word meaning, as well as a Blast.

Throughout the unit, students will read texts in a similar Lexile band that reflect both the theme of this unit-- hear me out-- and its genre focus: argumentative writing. Sojourner Truth’s “Speech to the Ohio Women’s Conference: Ain’t I a Woman?” is the lowest Lexile selection in the unit and is an approachable argumentative text on which eighth graders can practice their analysis of argumentative writing. Student struggles with this text are offset by skill lessons in reasons and evidence and language, style, and audience.

We have also grouped “To America,” “Letters of a Civil War Nurse” and *The Gettysburg Address* for Comparison Within and Across Genres. A poem, a letter, and a speech, all three selections focus on the Civil War and its consequences, especially for civil rights, and require prior knowledge about this era of American history. “To America” may challenge students, but a discussion about the treatment of African Americans following the Civil War as well as the era of the Harlem Renaissance will help students access this poem. “Letters of a Civil War Nurse” has a higher Lexile but is linked in topic to Abraham Lincoln’s speech. *The Gettysburg Address* is the highest Lexile text in the unit but is taught alongside skill lessons in arguments and claims and connotation and denotation, as well as a StudySyncTV episode.

English Language Learner Resources

Lessons in the English Language Learner Resources section offer explicit ELL 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, “It’s Not Fair” and “Ad Mad,” 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 Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and “Gaming Communities.”

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

After reading texts about impact of well-chosen words, students will complete an Extended Oral Project which 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 statement in the form of an oral presentation.

/HUG

AUTHOR	Name	Ehud Lavski & Yael Nathan
	Gender	Male
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	2017
	Genre	Fiction
	Access Complex Text Features	<p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The graphic short story is set inside a video game. Students need to understand that the setting is a virtual world. Students who have never played online games may need an explanation of avatars and non-playable characters. In the text, Lord Walker is an avatar controlled by a human player. Alena is a non-playable character. <p>Connection of Ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The setting is implied, and events that have occurred before the action of the graphic short story begins must also be inferred. Encourage students to connect elements of this story with other texts they have read and movies and TV shows they have seen. <p>Specific Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Because the text is a graphic short story, students will have to link images and dialogue to understand the characters and plot. An overview of massive multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPG) may be beneficial.
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Lexile®	N/A
	Word Count	486
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Language, Style, and Audience
	Close Read Prompt	<p>Literary Analysis: “/HUG” takes place inside a massively multiplayer online role-playing game, or MMORPG for short. In an MMORPG, a player can enter a command using a slash [/] that will cause his or her avatar to animate and perform a preset action. Therefore, the player who controls the avatar Lord Walker is also a character in the story. What can you infer about the player from the commands he gives Lord Walker? How do they relate to the theme or themes of the story? Use textual evidence of the character, the setting, and the plot to support your response.</p>
BEYOND THE BOOK	Beyond the Book Activity	<p>Graphic Story: Going Virtual Students will step into the virtual world of their choosing and create their own graphic stories to document the experience.</p> <p>Ask students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Think about their favorite video game. Imagine they have entered this virtual world as a character. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is their character like? What would they do in this virtual world if they only had a limited amount of time there? What challenge or danger would they face? What powers or tools would they have while in this world? Who would they meet? What relationships would be important to them? Use these questions to guide a rough draft of a story about an adventure that takes place in this virtual world. Create a storyboard outlining the events of the story. Combine drawings and text to create a graphic story on paper or online. <p>When students have completed their graphic stories, facilitate a gallery walk so they can explore each other’s stories.</p>
UNIT CONNECTION	Connect to Essential Question	In this graphic story the main character is confronted with a tough question: what do you do when you know that time is running out? As the real-life person behind an avatar works to warn a game character of what’s to come, choosing the right words seems to matter more than usual.
	Connect to Extended Writing Project	Students can use “/HUG” as an inspiration for their Extended Writing Project. They may adopt some of the authors’ sense of empathy and understanding of audience when delivering a message as they approach the writing of correspondence.

Gaming Communities

AUTHOR	Name	Joshua Vink and Caroline Rodgers
	Gender	Male/Female
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	2017
	Genre	Informational
	Access Complex Text Features	<p>Purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In a point/counterpoint text, one author argues for a position on an issue, and another author argues against it. Authors may use both logical evidence and persuasive techniques to support their conclusions. <p>Organization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The text is in two sections. The title is a question, and the headers are each author's answer to the question. Help students understand citations. Explain that a last name listed in parentheses identifies the text that provided the information. <p>Specific Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Terms related to gaming, such as multiplayer, game chat, and avatar, may present a challenge to some readers. An online dictionary may help define unfamiliar gaming terms.
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Lexile®	1120
	Word Count	1,313
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Arguments and Claims, Reasons and Evidence, Compare and Contrast
	Close Read Prompt	<p>Argumentative: Suppose these two essays appeared in a published journal or magazine. Write a letter to the publisher in which you express your opinions of both pieces by analyzing the argument of each text. In your letter, be sure to use evidence from each text that demonstrates your command of the information and the reasons for your opinion. You may also offer a recommendation of your own.</p>
BEYOND THE BOOK	Beyond the Book Activity	<p>Debate: The Value of Video Games</p> <p>Are video games a worthwhile investment of time? Tell students they will have two minutes to present their position in a formal debate. Once each student in the debate has had an opportunity to present their side, they will have one minute to respond to their partner's position, identifying areas of weakness in that position.</p> <p>Ask students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Choose a position. Research video games and collect evidence to support their position. Develop a clear claim and create an outline of their main points. Find a partner to rehearse their speech. Invite pairs of students with opposing views to the front of the room. <p>Pause after each debate to give the audience time to identify which argument of each pair is stronger and briefly state why. This can be done on paper or online.</p> <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> After listening to your peers debate, what are the strongest points in favor of playing video games and against it?
UNIT CONNECTION	Connect to Essential Question	In these essays, two authors express their opinions, pro and con, on the topic of gaming as a valid form of communication. Can gaming help a person learn how to communicate better, or does gaming encourage negative communication among players?
	Connect to Extended Writing Project	Students can use "Gaming Communities" as a mentor text when writing their letters of complaint. Have students identify persuasive techniques that may inform their own writing.

Denee Benton: Broadway Princess

AUTHOR	Name	Mekeisha Madden Toby
	Gender	Female
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	2018
	Genre	Informational
	Access Complex Text Features	<p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Antoinette Perry Award, named for actress Antoinette Perry and more commonly known as the Tony Award, recognizes excellence in live Broadway theater. A college prep school, short for college-preparatory school, is a type of high school that is primarily designed to prepare students for higher education. <p>Specific Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difficult and domain-specific vocabulary, such as <i>typesetting</i> (assigning an actor a role based on appearance or previous success in similar roles), <i>unwavering</i> (never ending) and <i>rigorous</i> (hard, difficult, and accurate), may need defining. Remind students to use context clues while reading, and also to use a dictionary to define unfamiliar words.
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Lexile®	1180
	Word Count	932
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	N/A
	Close Read Prompt	<p>Personal Response: Denee Benton started a series on social media called #blackprincessproject, which featured historical black royalty. Based on this article and your personal experience, what series or hashtag would you create on social media? Be sure to include reasons that support your choice.</p>
BEYOND THE BOOK	Beyond the Book Activity	<p>Writing: So You Want to be a Broadway Star!</p> <p>Use what you read about Denee Benton in this selection as a starting point for researching other Broadway stars such as Lin-Manuel Miranda, Sutton Foster, or Audra McDonald, Bernadette Peters, or Patti LuPone. How did they achieve Broadway stardom, handle setbacks in their careers, and continue to pursue their goals? Research at least two examples of people who have launched performing arts careers and achieved stardom on Broadway. Then write a “how to” motivational piece about what it takes to be a successful performer on Broadway today.</p> <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What qualifications and personality traits would be necessary? What insights have you gained about what it takes to succeed as a performer?
	Connect to Essential Question	In “Denee Benton: Broadway Princess,” a young actress pursued a role she was unsure of obtaining. Benton went on to receive a Tony award nomination. Her role as aristocrat in <i>Natasha, Pierre & The Great Comet of 1812</i> , also created an inspiring legacy for black women and girls and instigated Benton’s history series on Instagram called #blackprincessproject.
UNIT CONNECTION	Connect to Extended Writing Project	Students can find inspiration from Denee Benton for their personal responses. Review the question the reporter asked Denee and have them make a connection between what motivated her and some event or concern in their own lives.

Cover Letter to LucasArts

AUTHOR	Name	Tim Schafer
	Gender	Male
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1989
	Genre	Informational
	Access Complex Text Features	<p>Genre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A cover letter is a form of correspondence that is persuasive text giving a job applicant's qualifications. Schafer designed his cover letter as a text adventure game to showcase his skills. A text adventure game is a kind of computer game that requires players to make choices to continue game play. <p>Purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> While the primary purpose of a cover letter is to tell an employer why the writer is qualified for a job, this cover letter also shows Schafer's creativity and understanding of games. This unique cover letter includes graphics as well as text to communicate its message. <p>Specific Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specific terms, such as career center and <i>description</i>, may require explanation or visual support.
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Lexile®	N/A
	Word Count	494
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Word Meaning, Technical Language
	Close Read Prompt	<p>Compare and Contrast: “Cover Letter to Lucas Arts” and “Denee Benton: Broadway Princess” are both about individuals who push for new opportunities in new and unique ways. How does Tim Schafer’s approach differ from Denee Benton’s journey? How do they use language that is specific to their field, or technical language, to inform or persuade their intended audience? Using these texts as resources, explain which approach you would take if you wanted to get your dream job. Use evidence from both texts, including technical language, to explain your answer and why that technique is stronger in your opinion.</p>
BEYOND THE BOOK	Beyond the Book Activity	<p>Writing: Apply for Your Dream Job</p> <p>Adults always ask young people, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” Students will imagine their dream job and identify a company where they would like to apply for a job one day. Like Tim Schafer, they will need to put a creative spin on their cover letter to highlight their skills and creativity in relation to this particular job.</p> <p>Ask students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify their dream job. Research companies in this field and find a company they might want to apply to for a job. This is an opportunity for students to learn about company culture, expectations, and norms based on the companies’ websites and reviews. Write a cover letter with a creative spin designed to help them stand apart from other applicants. Combine art, media, and/or text to create their cover letter. <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What specific skills do you have now that you think might make you an attractive employee?
UNIT CONNECTION	Connect to Essential Question	In Tim Schafer’s “Cover Letter to LucasArts,” students see how someone in search of a creative job can use his craft as a means of persuasion. Schafer’s unusual approach for making his cover letter stand out shows students that sometimes choosing the right words is only the first step. Students have the opportunity to compare and contrast both of these selections.
	Connect to Extended Writing Project	Students can find inspiration from “Cover Letter to LucasArts” when writing their argumentative essays. Have students identify creative approaches that may inform their own writing.

Speech to the Ohio Women’s Conference: Ain’t I a Woman?

AUTHOR	Name	Sojourner Truth
	Gender	Female
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1851
	Genre	Argumentative
	Access Complex Text Features	<p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students may not know that the abolitionist and early feminist causes were intertwined. They may benefit from some explanation of this background. Students may benefit from more information about Sojourner Truth’s life. <p>Genre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This text was delivered orally. No original written version survives. Both of these versions are recreations that were printed in newspapers after the speech was given. Gage’s version was printed more than 10 years after Truth’s speech. <p>Sentence Structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gage’s version uses complex sentences with dialect and the speaker refers to herself in the third person. Help students paraphrase key ideas. Robinson’s version uses complex sentences with multiple clauses. Help students break down sentences.
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Lexile®	780
	Word Count	712
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Reasons and Evidence, Language, Audience, and Style
	Close Read Prompt	<p>Compare and Contrast: Compare and contrast the two versions of Sojourner Truth’s speech. Identify and analyze the main point of her argument, along with the reasons and evidence that she uses to support her claims. How do the analogies help her argument, and do they change between the two different versions? Finally, which version seems more effective? Why? Did you find that you had to reflect on and adjust your response to Gage’s version of the speech as new evidence was presented in Robinson’s version? If so, why?</p>
BEYOND THE BOOK	Beyond the Book Activity	<p>Infographic: Women’s Rights</p> <p>In her speech “Ain’t I a Woman?” Sojourner Truth speaks out for women’s rights. Even though it has been over 150 years since Truth delivered this speech, women’s rights are still a hot topic.</p> <p>Ask students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify a women’s rights issue they are interested in learning more about (e.g., pay equity, job discrimination, Title IX). Research this issue to learn more about it. Find at least three credible sources. Design an infographic on paper or online that uses graphs, charts, and images to inform the audience about this issue. Publish their infographics. <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why do you think women’s rights are such a hot topic right now? What was the most surprising fact or statistic you learned while working on this project?
UNIT CONNECTION	Connect to Essential Question	In this famous argumentative speech for women’s rights, abolitionist Sojourner Truth asks “Ain’t I a Woman?” Readers have the chance to imagine themselves as audience members as they read two versions of the iconic speech. Which version better showcases Truth’s powerful words?
	Connect to Extended Writing Project	Students can find inspiration from “Speech to the Ohio Women’s Conference: Ain’t I a Woman?” when writing their letters of complaint. Have students compare accounts and identify effective arguments.

Across Five Aprils

AUTHOR	Name	Irene Hunt
	Gender	Female
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1964
	Genre	Fiction
	Access Complex Text Features	<p>Genre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This text is historical fiction. While the author draws on factual information, the text also incorporates fictional elements. The excerpt is from Chapter 2. Students should make inferences to fill in missing information. <p>Sentence Structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The dialogue in the excerpt includes dialect. Explain that dialect is language used by people of a specific time or region. To help students understand the dialect, suggest they rewrite some dialogue using their most familiar form of English. <p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The excerpt explores the conflicts in a family torn apart by opposing loyalties in the months before the Civil War. Students may benefit from an overview on the causes and effects of the war.
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Lexile®	1060
	Word Count	1,393
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Media, Point of View
	Close Read Prompt	<p>Personal Response: Using the conversation at the dinner table as a reference, explain which character had the best argument, and state whether he or she was accurately represented in the video clips. You should also mention point of view in your response and cite specific lines from the text.</p>
BEYOND THE BOOK	Beyond the Book Activity	<p>Art: Learning Through Art</p> <p>Ask students to select one of the two artistic activities below to better understand the issues discussed at the Creightons' kitchen table. Both of these artistic activities will require research so that students have a better understanding of the issues that led to the Civil War.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> North vs. South: Visually depict the North versus the South using images to reveal their economic and social differences. This visual representation should provide insight into the causes of the Civil War. History of Slavery: Create a visual history of slavery. This visual can take any form (e.g. map, timeline, other), but it must include details that inform the viewer of the when, where, and why of slavery. <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What motivated you to select one activity over the other? What did you learn about the Civil War that you didn't know before completing this assignment?
UNIT CONNECTION	Connect to Essential Question	In this excerpt from Irene Hunt's novel <i>Across Five Aprils</i> , characters debate the causes and merits of going to war. The characters attempt to choose the words and arguments that will convince others to agree with them.
	Connect to Extended Writing Project	Students can find inspiration from the novel <i>Across Five Aprils</i> when writing their argumentative essays. Have students analyze how characters speak to each other to get their points across.

To America

AUTHOR	Name	James Weldon Johnson
	Gender	Male
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1917
	Genre	Poetry
	Access Complex Text Features	<p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Florida native James Weldon Johnson was a powerful voice for African Americans and an organizer for the NAACP, or National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, during the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s. Johnson published this poem in 1917, which was during racial segregation in the United States. <p>Specific Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difficult vocabulary, such as ‘neath (an abbreviation for under or below) and fixed (definite and not moving), may need defining. Remind students to use context clues while reading, and also to use a dictionary to define unfamiliar words.
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Lexile®	N/A
	Word Count	51
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	N/A
	Close Read Prompt	<p>Personal Response: Can a strong argument be made out of questions? Throughout “To America,” the speaker uses rhetorical questions to address America, which means he does not expect answers to these questions. How can these types of questions make a strong impact on an audience? If you were to present an argument, would you use this strategy? Answer why or why not using evidence from the text to support your opinion</p>
BEYOND THE BOOK	Beyond the Book Activity	<p>Writing: Lines of Questions . . .</p> <p>“To America” is addressed to a country, and it asks that country important rhetorical questions. The questions include contrasts. They describe contrasting, or opposite, paths that the country could take. Challenge students to write two questions to the world as it is now. Think of two contrasting directions it could take and write questions that describe those two possibilities. Place students into small groups to compile their questions.</p> <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Based on your group’s questions, what choices does the world need to make? What are some example of powerful rhetorical questions? What made them powerful?
UNIT CONNECTION	Connect to Essential Question	James Weldon Johnson’s short but eloquent poem “To America” shows the power of words to prod a nation into coming to terms with an ugly part of its past.
	Connect to Extended Writing Project	Students can find inspiration from “To America” for their literary analyses. Have them add a rhetorical question to their literary analysis that will help their argument make an impact on readers.

Letters of a Civil War Nurse

AUTHOR	Name	Cornelia Hancock
	Gender	Female
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1863
	Genre	Informational
	Access Complex Text Features	<p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain that medicine at the time of the Civil War was primitive. Doctors did not have antibiotics or understand the importance of clean instruments. Often, the way to fight infection was to amputate the infected limb. <p>Genre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remind students that before text messaging and email, written communication was slower. Letters at that time were longer and more detailed. Weeks might pass between letters. Ask students to imagine combining their social media updates for a week into one document. <p>Purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Point out that this is a battlefield nurse's letter to her mother. Have students consider what they would tell worried loved ones if they were in a risky situation.
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Lexile®	910
	Word Count	510
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	N/A
	Close Read Prompt	Personal Narrative: Write a letter in the quiet, composed style of Nurse Hancock in which you explain your need for something, such as supplies or information. First, think about the message you want to send. Next, decide on your audience, or the letter's recipient. Use language appropriate to the task.
BEYOND THE BOOK	Beyond the Book Activity	<p>Activity: Cornelia Hancock's Social Media Profile</p> <p>Today, a social media profile can reveal a lot about a person's interests, experiences, and relationships.</p> <p>Put students into small groups for this creative activity. Ask them to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research Cornelia Hancock's life to find out more about her. Select a type of social media to use for this activity. Create a profile and feed for Cornelia Hancock that reflects what you learned about her. <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What type of social media did you select? Why did you choose this particular type of social media? What information do you think a social media profile <i>should</i> include? How do you use your social media profiles? What information do you include and/or exclude?
UNIT CONNECTION	Connect to Essential Question	Cornelia Hancock's real-life letter to her mother from <i>Letters of a Civil War Nurse</i> recounts the aftermath of the Battle of Gettysburg. Though her letter does not set out to make an argument or persuasive appeal, her carefully chosen words still allow readers to understand the truth of her experiences.
	Connect to Extended Writing Project	Students can use this letter from <i>Letters of a Civil War Nurse</i> as a mentor text when writing their literary analysis. Hancock's descriptions and awareness of her audience can inform students' style.

The Gettysburg Address

AUTHOR	Name	Abraham Lincoln
	Gender	Male
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1863
	Genre	Informational
	Access Complex Text Features	<p>Specific Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some phrases and words, such as “conceived in liberty” and “hallow,” may present a challenge to readers. Learning the selection vocabulary is key to understanding Lincoln’s ideas. <p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This speech references a major battle of the Civil War, as well as ideals established by the Founding Fathers, that may be unfamiliar.
		<p>Connection of Ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The reason for the connection Lincoln makes between the Civil War and the Declaration of Independence might not be immediately apparent. Point out that the events were less than 90 years apart.
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Lexile®	1250
	Word Count	264
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Arguments and Claims, Connotation and Denotation
	Close Read Prompt	<p>Compare and Contrast: In the poem “To America,” James Weldon Johnson proposes questions that reflect on the oppression African Americans have faced. In the letter from Nurse Cornelia Hancock to her mother, she discusses the personal costs of the Civil War from her perspective. President Lincoln’s address on the Gettysburg battlefield was a public speech prepared for the nation. In what ways do the authors of the poem, letter, and speech form opinions and make arguments and claims about America? How are their arguments alike or different? Cite evidence from each text in your response.</p>
BEYOND THE BOOK	Beyond the Book Activity	<p>Perform: Modern Day Gettysburg Address Rap</p> <p>The musical <i>Hamilton</i> skillfully uses hip-hop music to tell the story of Alexander Hamilton’s life. Similarly, students will take President Lincoln’s famous <i>Gettysburg Address</i> and transform it into a catchy rap song that retains the central message and main points while making the delivery and language more contemporary.</p> <p>Ask students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the central message and main points in President Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address. Use today’s language and a rhyme scheme to transform Lincoln’s speech into a rap song. Encourage students to either record an audio file of themselves performing their rap or perform it live for the class. <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How challenging was it to take a speech written in 1863 and turn it into a rap that students today would want to listen to? Do you think music should be used more often to help students learn important information? Why or why not?
UNIT CONNECTION	Connect to Essential Question	Despite its brief duration, President Abraham Lincoln’s “Gettysburg Address” is widely acknowledged as one of the great speeches in American history. Lincoln’s address serves as an exemplar for the the importance of choosing the right words.
	Connect to Extended Writing Project	Students can use President Abraham Lincoln’s <i>Gettysburg Address</i> as a mentor text when writing their letters of complaint. Have students analyze Lincoln’s arguments as well as his sense of occasion.

The Adventures of Tom Sawyer (Chapter 2)

AUTHOR	Name	Mark Twain
	Gender	Male
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1876
	Genre	Fiction
	Access Complex Text Features	<p>Organization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The third-person omniscient point of view helps Twain to both be in Tom’s mind and to add humorous commentary. The third-person point of view also allows Twain to make a comment about human behavior at the end of the excerpt. <p>Genre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although this is humorous fiction, Twain’s humor is dry and subtle and may not be readily apparent to adolescents. The historical period of the novel is the mid-1800s. How boys spent their free time then may puzzle students. <p>Specific Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unfamiliar words and phrases will challenge students. Context clues or dictionaries can help determine meanings of words. Idioms are a special challenge. For example, “up a stump” means “in a situation too difficult to manage.”
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Lexile®	1070
	Word Count	1,233
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Point of View, Figurative Language, Allusion
	Close Read Prompt	<p>Argumentative: Tom Sawyer avoids making a request or a demand on his friends, but he does use argumentative techniques to persuade them to help him. Write a letter from Tom Sawyer’s point of view trying to persuade a neighbor to hire him for a whitewashing job. Use dramatic irony to create humor in your letter. Include some figurative language and an allusion as well.</p>
BEYOND THE BOOK	Beyond the Book Activity	<p>Perform: Reverse Psychology</p> <p>In Chapter 2 of <i>The Adventures of Tom Sawyer</i>, Tom uses reverse psychology—the technique of pretending to want the opposite of one’s true desire—to make the chore of whitewashing the fence seem like fun.</p> <p>Students will perform a skit to demonstrate a modern day scenario in which they might use reverse psychology to get what they want. Put students in small groups for this activity. Ask the groups to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss examples from their own lives when they used reverse psychology to get someone to do something. Select one scenario to develop into a skit. Assign roles to the various members of the group. Rehearse the skit. Perform for the class. <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What did these skits have in common? How did the performers make the “work” seem desirable?
UNIT CONNECTION	Connect to Essential Question	A con artist needs to be skilled at choosing the right words in order to mislead his or her victims, and Tom Sawyer is just that when he tries to trick his friends into doing his assigned chore. Will he get away with it?
	Connect to Extended Writing Project	Students can find inspiration from <i>The Adventures of Tom Sawyer</i> when writing their letters of complaint. Have students analyze Twain’s use of persuasive language to inform their own style.

Blind

AUTHOR	Name	Rachel DeWoskin
	Gender	Female
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	2014
	Genre	Fiction
	Access Complex Text Features	<p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blind people often have trouble sleeping because lack of light perception interrupts the normal day-night cycle. Dr. Sassoman is a therapist, which is a trained professional who helps people with physical or mental health problems cope with challenges. <p>Specific Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Braille is a system of writing that uses raised dots on paper. It allows blind people to read using their fingers. A braille is a machine for writing using the braille system. There are also computers that can be used to read and write braille. <p>Connection of Ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dr. Sassoman's treatment for Emma's problems plays an important role in this excerpt. The therapy process typically involves identifying the issues, determining strategies to help change behaviors, assessing the progress, and making adjustments.
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Lexile®	970
	Word Count	1,047
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Connotation and Denotation, Word Patterns and Relationships
	Close Read Prompt	<p>Discussion: In <i>Blind</i>, Emma Silver loses her eyesight in a nightmarish accident and she must relearn everything, such as how to cross a busy street, and she has to learn new things too, like using the braille alphabet. How does this tragic accident affect Emma? Discuss how author Rachel DeWoskin uses word patterns as well as the positive and negative connotations of words to describe how Emma feels and how this life-changing event has impacted her. Use evidence from the text to support your conclusions.</p>
BEYOND THE BOOK	Beyond the Book Activity	<p>Writing: Finding the Right Words</p> <p>Ask students to reflect in writing about what they would say to someone who needs encouragement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Would “the right words” change depending on the situation? For what reasons would a person need encouragement? Who do you know who may need encouragement? Why is encouragement important? <p>As a follow-up activity to the reflection, ask students to write on the board the top three occasions or instances when they think a person would most benefit from encouragement. Alternatively, they can enter the top three qualities in an online word cloud generator so that the class can view and discuss the trends in the words selected.</p> <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you think most people benefit from encouragement throughout their lives? Why or why not?
UNIT CONNECTION	Connect to Essential Question	In the novel <i>Blind</i> , author Rachel DeWoskin explores the journey of an adolescent young woman who has lost her sight.
	Connect to Extended Writing Project	Students can use <i>Blind</i> as a mentor text for their Extended Writing Project. They may analyze some of the events that take place in the text and reflect on whether actions or words of encouragement helped Emma the most.

TEXT COMPLEXITY

UNIT 5: TIMES THAT TRY US

Unit Title: Trying Times

Essential Question: Who are you in a crisis?

Genre Focus: Drama

Overview

World War II was a time of crisis for many different groups of people. Some faced danger head-on in the battlefields, oceans, and skies. Others, including Anne Frank, Elie Wiesel, and Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston, found themselves in a different kind of danger. These people and millions of others like them were targets of extreme prejudice. The war changed everything about their lives. Many, like Anne Frank, did not live to tell the tale. Yet, their stories survive. With a genre focus on drama, this Grade 8 unit helps students to understand how times of crisis affect people.

The unit begins with a focus on World War II, including *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl* in addition to the dramatic adaptation *The Diary of Anne Frank: A Play*. Other selections that shed light on this international crisis include an excerpt from *Parallel Journeys*, a multi-perspective historical look at Kristallnacht, as well as iconic speeches by Winston Churchill and Elie Wiesel. Students will experience the American side of the crisis in *Farewell to Manzanar*.

Other selections help students understand different types of crises. The excerpt from *Refugee* challenges readers to explore the complexities of living in a country that is constantly threatened by bombings, riots, and violence. Nelson Mandela's autobiography *Long Walk to Freedom* reflects on crises that have passed.

After reading about crises within and across genres, your students will write and deliver an oral presentation, applying what they have learned from the unit's dramas, fiction, poetry, speeches, and informational texts to an extended oral project.

Text Complexity

Grade 8 Unit 5 continues eighth 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 780-1270, the majority of the texts in this unit fall between 820L and 890L, a comfortable

level of difficulty for most eighth graders. Additionally, the vocabulary, sentence structures, text features, content, and relationships among ideas make these texts accessible to eighth graders, enabling them to grow as readers by interacting with such appropriately challenging texts.

For the purposes of Comparing Within and Across Genres, and because the topic is of great historical significance, we have grouped a passage from *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl* and a scene from *The Diary of Anne Frank: A Play*. Accessing these works require prior knowledge about World War II and the Holocaust. Through reading these selections and completing the accompanying skill lessons, students will learn how lived experience can be related powerfully in many forms. Both selections are paired with a lesson in dramatic elements and structure as well as two StudySyncTV episodes. The following text, *Parallel Journeys* is a holocaust narrative that will force students to answer the question of who they would become under extreme circumstances. This informational text is taught alongside a skill lesson in informational text elements.

Students will read texts in a similar Lexile range and theme throughout the unit. Winston Churchill’s famous speech “Blood, Toil, Tears and Sweat” may challenge students with higher level vocabulary and organization. This text’s thematic link to World War II, a skill lesson on informational text structure, as well as a StudySyncTV episode, will help students engage with these difficulties. Farewell to Manzanar is a lower Lexile excerpt from a novel that is also about World War II. Elie Wiesel’s “Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech” gives students an opportunity to think about how to inspire people to action during a time of crisis. This selection is read alongside a skill lesson on informational text structure, reasons and evidence, as well as a StudySyncTV episode. Similar levels of difficulty in these selections will allow students to develop skills to access a variety of texts throughout this unit.

The poem “America,” *Gandhi the Man: How One Man Changed Himself to Change the World*, and *Long Walk to Freedom* are grouped together for Comparison Within and Across Genres. These three selections in two different genres work together to explore the kinds of things that can keep people in literal and figurative prisons, and ways that people might grow and move beyond a difficult personal crisis.

English Language Learner Resources

Lessons in the English Language Learner Resources section offer explicit ELL 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 Blitz” and “A Letter from Robert,” 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 “Blood, Toil, Tears and Sweat” and *Teen Mogul*.

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

After reading texts about how times of crises affect people, students will complete an Extended Oral Project which can be used in place of or as an extension to the Extended Writing Project. In this unit, students will reflect on a crisis in their own lives as they plan and present a personal soliloquy.

Teen Mogul

AUTHOR	Name	Lucy Wang
	Gender	Female
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	2012
	Genre	Drama
	Access Complex Text Features	<p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain that a mogul is an important or powerful business person. Point out that DNA is a nucleic acid found in all living cells and carries hereditary information from parent to child. <p>Specific Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difficult vocabulary, such as <i>stock options</i> (a benefit given to an employee to buy stock in a company at a discount) and <i>cuisine</i> (a method of cooking characteristic of a particular region), may need defining. Remind students to use context clues and a dictionary to define unfamiliar words.
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Lexile®	N/A
	Word Count	1,192
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Plot, Dramatic Elements and Structure
	Close Read Prompt	<p>Narrative: Write part of Scene 8 that continues the story of Tracy and Christopher Brennan. How might Tracy’s attitude change when she reports for her first day of work? Will Christopher prove to be that “mercurial” boss that Tracy talked about during her interview? Think about dialogue or specific incidents you might include that continue and propel the action and keep the light, humorous tone of the play.</p>
BEYOND THE BOOK	Beyond the Book Activity	<p>Writing: Successful Job Interviews</p> <p>Ask students to create a digital set of guidelines that lists tips for navigating a job interview successfully. Digital guidelines can combine text, images, videos, and/or narration.</p> <p>Digital guidelines should address the following steps and/or points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research the company before your interview. Clarify the reasons why you want the job. Anticipate any questions you think the interviewer might ask. Take time to practice. <p>Students can use an online video creator to design and publish their guidelines. They may wish to engage classmates into enacting a sample job interview on video with “dos” and “don’ts”. Encourage students to share their guidelines with friends, family, and teachers.</p> <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What would you want to know about a company before an interview? Why would practicing for an interview with a friend or family member be helpful?
	Connect to Essential Question	In this play written for young adults by Lucy Wang and inspired by a true story, teenage Tracy’s mother leaves, and Tracy and the rest of her family are about to lose their home. In this excerpt, the Tracy meets this crisis head-on by applying for a high-level executive job with a business mogul. Will Tracy succeed in becoming a mogul herself to save her family?
UNIT CONNECTION	Connect to Extended Writing Project	Students can find inspiration from <i>Teen Mogul</i> when writing their scenes. Have them reflect on Lucy Wang’s use of dialogue to propel the action of the plot.

Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl

AUTHOR	Name	Anne Frank
	Gender	Female
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1947
	Genre	Informational
	Access Complex Text Features	<p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The diary excerpts make reference to concentration camps, Germany’s restrictions on Jewish people, and other aspects of the Holocaust that some students may have limited knowledge of. The events take place in the Netherlands, so some of the names of people and places may be unfamiliar to students. <p>Genre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This selection consists of diary entries. Students may be confused by the author’s reference to “Kitty,” who is Anne’s imaginary friend as personified by the diary. <p>Connection of Ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The impact of historical events on the life of the Frank family—such as the “call-up” of Jews and radio broadcasts from England—is complicated and may require explanation.
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Lexile®	790
	Word Count	1,259
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	N/A
	Close Read Prompt	<p>Personal Response: What do you know about Anne Frank from this diary excerpt? What do you learn about her circumstances? Use textual evidence to explain any inferences. Finally, think about the use of a diary—Anne calls hers “Kitty”—to share this information. How might you use a diary? What makes a diary different from other kinds of communication?</p>
BEYOND THE BOOK	Beyond the Book Activity	<p>Writing: Diary Entries from a Different Point of View</p> <p>Students will write three journal entries from the perspective of Anne’s sister, Margot, or her father, Otto, that explore the events from June 24, 1942; July 8, 1942; and July 11, 1942.</p> <p>Ask students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Imagine they are either Anne’s sister, Margot, or her father, Otto. Write three diary entries from this person’s point of view that reflect on the events of June 24, July 8, and July 11. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does this character feel about the changes taking place in the Netherlands? How do the restrictions placed on the Jewish people impact his/her daily life? How does this person react when the family receives the “call-up notice”? What did he/she pack before going into hiding? What did this person leave behind (e.g., sentimental items, work, relationships)? What is his/her reaction to the Annex and life there? Use details from Anne’s journals to write these diary entries.
UNIT CONNECTION	Connect to Essential Question	During what would be the last years of her life, Anne Frank kept a diary of her personal experiences as her family went into hiding from Nazis. In <i>The Diary of a Young Girl</i> , Anne’s everyday experiences take on a frightening tone.
	Connect to Extended Writing Project	Students can use Anne Frank’s diary as a resource for their Extended Oral Project. They may use Anne’s situation and experiences as inspiration for taking a position on an issue.

The Diary of Anne Frank: A Play

AUTHOR	Name	Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett
	Gender	Male/Female
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1955
	Genre	Drama
	Access Complex Text Features	<p>Genre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The title mentions a diary, but the selection takes the form of a play; this may initially confuse students. Although the play is based on actual events, the dialogue is fictional. Explain that the playwrights adapted the content of the diary for dramatic purposes. <p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allusions to what the Franks and other families endured while in hiding may not be familiar to students. Background in the events of World War II, especially the Holocaust, may be helpful. <p>Connection of Ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students may have difficulty recognizing the transition, done via voiceover, between the opening scene in 1945 and the flashback to the events of 1942 described in the diary. Students must combine the dialogue and stage directions with their prior knowledge to understand the purpose of the scene.
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Lexile®	N/A
	Word Count	1,259
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Making Connections, Dramatic Elements and Structure, Word Meaning
	Close Read Prompt	<p>Compare and Contrast: In this first scene of Act I of <i>The Diary of Anne Frank: A Play</i>, the playwrights include stage directions to show a man, Mr. Frank, preparing to leave. Following that model, choose one brief part of the diary excerpt from <i>Diary of a Young Girl</i> to dramatize. Following your dramatization, compare the diary excerpt with your drama and also with the play excerpt that you read. How can drama bring out or stress specific ideas? What ideas might be better suited to a diary?</p>
BEYOND THE BOOK	Beyond the Book Activity	<p>Performance: Act I, Scene II – Wednesday, July 8, 1942</p> <p>Students will take Anne’s diary entry from Wednesday, July 8, 1942, and transform it into a scene using detailed stage directions and dialogue.</p> <p>Form students into small groups and ask them to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read Anne’s diary entry from Wednesday, July 8, 1942, and identify events and details they want to incorporate into their scene. Decide which characters will be in the scene. Work collaboratively to write stage directions that describe the stage, characters, and mood. Use details from Anne’s diary entry to write dialogue from the various characters’ points of view to move the plot forward. <p>Once students have written their scenes, each group can take turns doing a theatrical cold reading of their script for the class.</p> <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What details did you add that were not in the diary entry? Why did you add them?
UNIT CONNECTION	Connect to Essential Question	<i>Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl</i> was adapted into a play by Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett. The dramatization of the opening of the play shows the discovery of Anne’s long-hidden diary in the aftermath of World War II.
	Connect to Extended Writing Project	Students can use <i>The Diary of Anne Frank: A Play</i> as a resource for their Extended Oral Project. They may use the experiences of Anne’s family as inspiration for taking a position on an issue.

Parallel Journeys

AUTHOR	Name	Eleanor Ayer
	Gender	Female
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1995
	Genre	Informational
	Access Complex Text Features	<p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The main events of the Holocaust, including pogroms carried out against Jews, and the Nazi movement may need explaining for students who are unfamiliar with Hitler’s role in World War II. References to the Nazi regime (“SA and SS men, the Brownshirts and the Blackshirts,” “concentration camps,” “Buchenwald”) as well as German words (<i>Kristallnacht</i>, <i>Schutzstaffel</i>, <i>Strasse</i>, <i>Schweinhunde</i>, <i>marks</i>) and Jewish religious elements (<i>synagogue</i>, <i>Torah</i>) may need clarification or explanation. <p>Organization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students may be confused by the long quotations, as well as the shifting points of view and different versions of events. <p>Sentence Structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences, as well as information-packed phrases in the narration, may require simplifying.
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Lexile®	1050
	Word Count	1,155
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Informational Text Elements
	Close Read Prompt	Narrative: Write an imagined newspaper or TV news account of the events discussed in the excerpt from <i>Parallel Journeys</i> . Identify either people, or places, and other details, as well as the connections and distinctions between them, as a reporter might. Be careful not to alter the events as you read about them in the selection.
BEYOND THE BOOK	Beyond the Book Activity	<p>Writing: Research a Claim</p> <p>Seventeen-year-old Herschel Grynszpan was a German Jew living in France in 1938. Outraged when his father in Germany was shipped to Poland by the Nazis, Herschel walked into the German Embassy in Paris and shot Ernst vom Rath, a secretary who worked there. In an act of revenge, <i>Kristallnacht</i> was enacted within hours of vom Rath’s death. Although the assassination of Vom Rath was the catalyst for <i>Kristallnacht</i>, anti-semitism was widespread in Germany once Adolf Hitler became chancellor on January 30, 1933.</p> <p>Ask students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research the beginnings of Hitler’s rule in Germany and the early stages of the anti-semitic policies the Nazi Party put in place beginning in 1933, five years before <i>Kristallnacht</i> occurred. Investigate the reaction of the world press outside Germany and how newspapers and other news sources reacted to the events of November 9-10, 1938. Write a clear claim that the events of <i>Kristallnacht</i> precipitated the start of the Holocaust. Include citations for all of the resources they included in their paragraph. <p>Pair students so they can provide one another with peer edits on their paragraphs.</p> <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How did the anti-semitic policies the Nazis put in place between 1933–1938 lead directly to the events of <i>Kristallnacht</i>? What did the reactions of the press outside of Germany reveal?
UNIT CONNECTION	Connect to Essential Question	This nonfiction text presents the interwoven stories of a participant in the Hitler Youth and a young Jewish woman who fled to Holland to escape the Nazis. Readers have the chance to consider what they would have done during the Nazis’ rise to power. Would they have joined in or would they have tried to resist the Nazis? Who would they have become in such a crisis?
	Connect to Extended Writing Project	Students should use <i>Parallel Journeys</i> as a resource when composing their oral presentations. Have them consider what Helen went through and the steps she took to help members of her family in the aftermath of <i>Kristallnacht</i> as they reflect on the issues that are important to them.

Blood, Toil, Tears and Sweat

AUTHOR	Name	Winston Churchill
	Gender	Male
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1940
	Genre	Informational
	Access Complex Text Features	<p>Purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students may not know that World War II started with Hitler's invasion of countries in Europe. In 1940, Germany was trying to destroy the British army. Churchill gave the speech in the House of Commons just after he became Prime Minister. It was later broadcast on the radio. Clarify that Winston Churchill had to establish a new government and unify his nation. <p>Specific Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The speech includes British spellings (such as <i>rigour</i>) and unfamiliar capitalization (<i>Motion</i>). Provide British government background: Parliament consists of the House of Lords and the House of Commons. The prime minister leads the nation in consultation with the king or queen. "His Majesty" refers to King George VI. <p>Organization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The speech explains preceding events as well as Churchill's goal for future victory in the war.
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Lexile®	1220
	Word Count	730
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Informational Text Structure
	Close Read Prompt	Informative: What information does Winston Churchill present in this speech to Britain? How does the structure of his speech help him develop and refine the key concept of the speech? Cite evidence from the text to explain.
BEYOND THE BOOK	Beyond the Book Activity	<p>Speech: A Call to Action</p> <p>Students will identify a "crisis" facing our country and write a speech calling Americans to action.</p> <p>Ask students to write a speech in which they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify a current crisis facing our country. This can be an outside threat, an environmental danger, or an issue of social inequality. Outline the steps that the American government and the people must take to address this crisis. Skilfully use tone, word choice, and rhythm to make clear and compelling points. Inspire Americans to take action in the face of this crisis. <p>Once students have written their speeches, ask them to record a dramatic reading of their speech or deliver their speech in front of the class.</p> <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why did you select this particular "crisis" for your speech? What is currently being done to address this crisis? What other famous speeches inspired your writing?
UNIT CONNECTION	Connect to Essential Question	In this iconic speech from 1940, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill encourages citizens to stay strong in the face of war. As the crisis in Europe developed into World War II, how would the British react? Would they cower in fear, or would they rise to the challenge?
	Connect to Extended Writing Project	Students can use "Blood, Toil, Tears and Sweat" as a mentor text for their Extended Oral Project. They may adopt some of Churchill's persuasive techniques into their own writing, or they may use examples from the speech as illustrations to support a position.

Farewell to Manzanar

AUTHOR	Name	Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston and James D. Houston
	Gender	Female/Male
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1973
	Genre	Informational
	Access Complex Text Features	<p>Purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students will benefit from knowing that the author’s purpose is to inform readers of an aspect of U.S. history that is often not covered in detail in textbooks. <p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Background information about the federal government’s persecution of Asian Americans during World War II, which culminated in Executive Order 9066 and internment camps, may be helpful to students who are unfamiliar with this issue. Students may not be aware that California had a large population of Japanese Americans at the time of World War II. <p>Organization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The shifts between first-person narrative and dialogue may be difficult for some students to follow. Point out to students that the co-author/narrator wrote the text when she was an adult and is reflecting back on a time when she was a child.
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Lexile®	990
	Word Count	1,375
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Textual Evidence
	Close Read Prompt	<p>Discussion: Choose one moment in this excerpt from <i>Farewell to Manzanar</i> where you can make an inference. What is the inference, and how can it help readers better understand the text? Identify textual evidence that most strongly supports your analysis. Then share and discuss your inference with a small group. In your discussion, be sure to reflect on and adjust your responses as new evidence is presented.</p>
BEYOND THE BOOK	Beyond the Book Activity	<p>Presentation: Japanese Internment</p> <p>Students will research the Japanese internment and life in the relocation camps to gain a better understanding of the fate that awaits Jeanne Wakatsuki and her family. Students will use this research to create class presentations.</p> <p>Break students into small groups. Assign each group to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research the Japanese internment experience by taking notes on one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The evacuation process What families were allowed to bring to the relocation camp Locations of the relocation camps Living conditions in the camps Daily life in the camps How the internment ended Create a multimedia presentation to present information to the class. Present their findings to the class in a formal presentation, in order by group assignment. <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What did you learn as a result of presentations? What would you like to research further?
UNIT CONNECTION	Connect to Essential Question	In this excerpt from Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston’s autobiography, readers learn about how the bombing of Pearl Harbor affected Japanese families in California. As tensions mounted during World War II, the Federal Bureau of Investigation and American citizens alike began to look for the enemy in their own backyards. How can times of crisis drive people to take extreme measures?
	Connect to Extended Writing Project	Students can use <i>Farewell to Manzanar</i> as a resource for their Extended Oral Project. They may use the experiences surrounding the Japanese internment as inspiration for taking a position on an issue.

Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech

AUTHOR	Name	Elie Wiesel
	Gender	Male
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1986
	Genre	Informational
	Access Complex Text Features	<p>Purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wiesel gave this speech when he accepted the Nobel Peace Prize in 1986. Wiesel won the prize for his work as a human rights activist, work which began as a result of being imprisoned in concentration camps during World War II. <p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Massacres of Jews in Europe began before World War II. The Holocaust refers to the mass killing of Jews by Nazi Germany and Adolf Hitler. The phrase “The Kingdom of Night” alludes to Wiesel’s memoir, <i>Night</i>, as well as the Holocaust. <p>Organization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wiesel uses a variety of sentence structures. Many sentences are short, especially as he “talks” with his younger self.
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Lexile®	780
	Word Count	602
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Informational Text Structure, Reasons and Evidence
	Close Read Prompt	Argumentative: How does Wiesel connect his personal story to the key concept of this speech? Are his reasons and evidence relevant and effective in developing the speech’s message? Support your writing with evidence from the text.
BEYOND THE BOOK	Beyond the Book Activity	<p>Poem: The Kingdom of Night</p> <p>Students will use a combination of Elie Wiesel’s words from his “Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech” and their own words to write a poem about the Kingdom of Night.</p> <p>Ask students to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reread Elie Wiesel’s “Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech,” highlighting the most powerful words and phrases. Combine those words and phrases with their own words to write a poem about the Kingdom of Night. Choose a poetic form, such as lyric or free verse. Explore the darkness Elie Wiesel endured and why he believes it is important to remember what happened and speak out against oppression. <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How did the form of the poem alter the message? Was the poem as effective as the speech? Why or why not?
UNIT CONNECTION	Connect to Essential Question	In “miss rosie” by Lucille Clifton, the speaker focuses on a homeless woman. Similarly, “The Idler” by Alice Dunbar-Nelson has an “idle lingerer” as its central figure, although the tone of the two poems starkly contrast each other.
	Connect to Extended Writing Project	Students can find inspiration from Lucille Clifton’s poem for their literary analysis essays. Have students work in groups to discuss the theme of alienation in the poem.

Refugee

AUTHOR	Name	Alan Gratz
	Gender	Male
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	2017
	Genre	Fiction
	Access Complex Text Features	<p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Arab Spring began in 2010 and spread quickly throughout the Middle East; many citizens decided to oppose and rebel against their governments and leaders because of the oppression they had endured. Explain to students that Bashar al-Assad has been the Syrian president since 2000, and he has a dangerous and violent history as the country's leader. <p>Specific Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Certain words in the text might require more context for students, such as <i>barrel bombs</i> (metal containers filled with explosives) and the difference between <i>Sunnis</i> (people of Islamic faith who believe anyone who is a good leader in the faith can be Muhammad's successor) and <i>Shiites</i> (people of Islamic faith who believe that religious leaders should only be descendants of Muhammad's family). Remind students to use context clues while reading, and also to use a dictionary to define unfamiliar words.
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Lexile®	960
	Word Count	1,230
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Language, Style, and Audience
	Close Read Prompt	Literary Analysis: Which words chosen by the author to describe images, ideas, and events in <i>Refugee</i> do you think strongly convey what it is like to be challenged by living in the midst of a civil war? Cite textual evidence, including specific word choices that affected you in this way, and explain why they had this effect.
BEYOND THE BOOK	Beyond the Book Activity	<p>Photo Essay: Is a Picture Worth a Thousand Words?</p> <p>Civil wars, uprisings, and consequent refugee movements occur around the world. To engage students in learning about these current events, have them do the following:</p> <p>Identify a country of the world where civil strife is causing challenges for civilians and refugee movements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do research on the causes and status of the strife. Locate one or two photographs reflecting the strife and/or refugees from it. <p>Write a caption to explain the details of the event shown in each photo.</p> <p>Display the photos and captions. To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What do the photos and words make you think about? How might you describe the challenges of refugees?
UNIT CONNECTION	Connect to Essential Question	The setting in the novel written by Alan Gatz is war-torn Syria and the ancient city of Aleppo, which is slowly being destroyed. This crisis presents constant dangers to Mahmoud and his younger brother, even in the everyday act of walking home from school. How does a boy survive when “random death” is possible at any moment?
	Connect to Extended Writing Project	Students can find inspiration from <i>Refugee</i> when preparing their oral presentations. Have them reflect on the situation in Mahmoud's country and the challenges that civilians in war-torn countries undergo.

America

AUTHOR	Name	Claude McKay
	Gender	Male
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1921
	Genre	Poetry
	Access Complex Text Features	<p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The author of the poem, Claude McKay, was born in Jamaica in 1889 but moved to the United States in 1912. While living in the states, McKay wrote about the racism and oppression African Americans experienced. He was a key figure during the Harlem Renaissance. <p>Organization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The poem is classified as a “Shakespearean sonnet” because it consists of 14 lines in only one stanza. The poem also has the traditional rhyme scheme in which the lines are grouped as follows: there are three quatrains, or groups of four lines in which every other line rhymes, followed by one couplet that consists of two rhyming lines at the end of the poem.
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Lexile®	N/A
	Word Count	110
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	N/A
	Close Read Prompt	<p>Discussion: Why do you think McKay refers to America as “she” in his poem? Do you think there is symbolism behind this choice? Discuss these questions with a group of your peers. To prepare for your discussion, set specific goals for sharing everyone’s opinion, defining individual roles (speaker, recorder, timer) as needed. Use evidence of his relationship with America from the poem as support for your ideas. After your discussion, you will write a reflection in the space below.</p>
BEYOND THE BOOK	Beyond the Book Activity	<p>Writing: Dear Poetry . . .</p> <p>Claude McKay’s poem “America” is unique because he never actually mentions the subject of his poem in the poem itself. The reader deciphers symbolism to infer what his relationship with the country is. Challenge students to write their own poem about a subject. However, they are not allowed to directly name the subject of their piece in the poem itself. They should rely on symbolism, figurative language, metaphors, similes, or other poetic elements to communicate their theme. Place students into small groups to read their poems to one another, and then their peers can try to guess the subject of the poem. Write a caption to explain the details of the event shown in each photo.</p> <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How can keeping the subject of the poem unknown add dimension or meaning to the piece? What insights have you gained about using symbolism or other poetic elements to reflect on a subject?
	Connect to Essential Question	In Claude McKay’s poem “America,” the speaker reflects on his ambivalent relationship with his native land, both loving her “vigor” yet feeling like “a rebel” standing “within her walls.”
UNIT CONNECTION	Connect to Extended Writing Project	Students can find inspiration from Claude McKay’s “America” for their Extended Oral Project. Have them work on engaging an audience with strong and/or symbolic language to defend their stance in the argumentative prompt.

Gandhi the Man: How One Man Changed Himself to Change the World

AUTHOR	Name	Eknath Easwaran
	Gender	Male
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	2001
	Genre	Non-Fiction
	Access Complex Text Features	<p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The author of the poem, Claude McKay, was born in Jamaica in 1889 but moved to the United States in 1912. While living in the states, McKay wrote about the racism and oppression African Americans experienced. He was a key figure during the Harlem Renaissance.
		<p>Organization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The poem is classified as a “Shakespearean sonnet” because it consists of 14 lines in only one stanza. The poem also has the traditional rhyme scheme in which the lines are grouped as follows: there are three quatrains, or groups of four lines in which every other line rhymes, followed by one couplet that consists of two rhyming lines at the end of the poem.
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Lexile®	1170
	Word Count	686
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	N/A
	Close Read Prompt	<p>Personal Response: In the biography <i>Gandhi the Man: How One Man Changed Himself to Change the World</i>, we learn of Gandhi’s nonviolent Salt March in which he inspired thousands of Indian citizens to peacefully protest British law, despite being on the receiving end of violent beatings, arrests, and shootings. As a result, ordinary people became heroes while following the nonviolent and unconventional methods of Gandhi. Think about your own life. When have you used unconventional methods to solve a problem? What was your motivation? What effect did your choices have on the outcome? Support your response with evidence from the text as well as personal experience. As you make connections between Gandhi’s motivations and your own, include anything that may have altered your understanding of Gandhi’s unconventional methods.</p>
BEYOND THE BOOK	Beyond the Book Activity	<p>Writing: So you want to be an activist . . .</p> <p>Use what you read about Gandhi in the biography as a starting point for researching other peaceful activists in history, such as Martin Luther King, Jr., Nelson Mandela, and Rosa Parks. How did they stay strong despite many obstacles, including violence and arrests? Using at least three examples of nonviolent activists from history, write a “resume” about what it takes to be a successful, peaceful activist in today’s society. Include qualifications and personality traits that would be necessary.</p> <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What did comparing peaceful activists teach you about “fighting” for a cause? What insights have you gained about the best way to resolve conflicts in today’s society?
UNIT CONNECTION	Connect to Essential Question	In this excerpt from Eknath Easwaran’s biography of the leader of the independence movement in India, Mahatma Gandhi’s strong belief in nonviolent civil disobedience is put into practice as he leads the Salt March against British political and economic control in India.
	Connect to Extended Writing Project	Students can find inspiration from Mahatma Gandhi for their argumentative oral presentations. Have them make a connection between the way Gandhi took a stand and what position they would advocate. They can also use the biography to cite textual evidence to support their argument in the presentation.

Long Walk to Freedom

AUTHOR	Name	Nelson Mandela
	Gender	Male
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1994
	Genre	Informational
	Access Complex Text Features	<p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students may benefit from background on South African historical events mentioned by Nelson Mandela, beginning with the Anglo-Boer War. Great Britain won the war against two Boer (colonial Dutch) republics in southern Africa. The war lasted from 1899 until 1902. Mandela is recognized for his opposition to apartheid. Adopted at the end of the Anglo-Boer War, apartheid placed many restrictions on nonwhite people. Opposition to apartheid was violently repressed. Mandela was born in 1918. Arrested for protesting apartheid, Mandela was in prison from 1962 to 1990. In 1994, he became the first black president of South Africa, serving until 1999. He died in 2013 at age 95. <p>Sentence Structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students may find Mandela's complex sentences and long descriptions challenging. You may wish to help students break long sentences or sections into shorter chunks. The sentences are dense with information. You may wish to encourage students to ask and answer questions about Mandela's references. <p>Connection of Ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mandela explains his idea about courage and describes how the events in his life shaped his thoughts and actions. Encourage students to make connections between Mandela's desire for personal freedom and his desire for the freedom of his people.
	Lexile®	1270
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Word Count	1,665
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Author's Purpose and Point of View, Informational Text Elements
	Close Read Prompt	Informative: In the autobiography <i>Long Walk to Freedom</i> , what is Nelson Mandela's purpose? How does Mandela communicate his point of view about strength despite living in times of crisis? Cite evidence from the selection to explain.
BEYOND THE BOOK	Beyond the Book Activity	<p>Research: From Prisoner to President—A Visual Timeline</p> <p>Students will research Nelson Mandela's life to create a visual timeline of the major events that led him to be imprisoned and then freed and elected president.</p> <p>Ask students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research Nelson Mandela's life. Create a timeline with at least six dates and visuals marking the most significant events in his life. Draw pictures, print photos, or sketch scenes to show the events in the timeline. Include key pieces of information with the dates and images. <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How could someone imprisoned for 27 years be elected president? What led to his political rise after being freed from prison? How did the various timelines differ in the way information was chosen and depicted? How were they similar?
	UNIT CONNECTION	Connect to Essential Question
Connect to Extended Writing Project		Students can use <i>Long Walk to Freedom</i> as a resource for their Extended Oral Project. They may use the experiences and insights of Nelson Mandela as inspiration for taking a position on an issue.

TEXT COMPLEXITY

UNIT 6: BEYOND REALITY

Unit Title: Beyond Reality

Essential Question: What do other worlds teach us about our own?

Genre Focus: Science Fiction and Fantasy

Overview

Aliens. Ghosts. Vampires. Wizards. Fantasy and science fiction stories have endless possibilities. Whether the characters are humans dealing with mysterious otherworldly elements or extraterrestrial beings looking for a place to call home, science fiction and fantasy authors mesmerize readers by creating new worlds.

But what can fantastical stories teach us about our own world? Why are these stories so compelling to readers and writers alike? How can an escape into an imagined reality help us understand our own society?

Those are the questions your students will explore in this Grade 8 unit.

Iconic authors H.G. Wells and Ray Bradbury are featured in this unit along with fiction writers Susan Cooper and Ekaterina Sedia, as well as poets Sara Teasdale and Derrick Harriell. Their works challenge students to reconsider their understandings of the past, the future, and what makes us human. Informational texts by Randall Munroe and The United Nations Commission on Human Rights inspire students to think about two alternate realities: one in which humans need to evacuate the planet and one in which all people live together peacefully.

At the end of the unit, students will turn from readers into researchers as they plan and write a research paper on the topic of their own choosing. Drawing inspiration from the authors and texts they've read in the unit, students will craft a research question and use primary and secondary sources to answer it. Their answers will guide them toward understanding how fantasy and science fiction texts help us understand the world in which we live.

Text Complexity

Grade 8 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 several works of fiction as well as some informational texts and poems. The Lexile range for this unit is 810-1380, with most texts falling between 1160L and 1070L. The selections in this unit should be approachable for most eighth graders in length and difficulty. Additionally, the vocabulary, sentence

structures, text features, content, and relationships among ideas make these texts accessible to eighth graders, enabling them to grow as readers by interacting with such appropriately challenging texts.

For the purposes of Comparing Within and Across Genres, we have grouped an excerpt from *The Dark Is Rising*, the poem “There Will Come Soft Rains,” and the short story “There Will Come Soft Rains.” *The Dark Is Rising* includes mythology and English history and students could benefit from a prior discussion. Following *The Dark Is Rising*, the poem “There Will Come Soft Rains” has a recognizable rhyme scheme and should be accessible to most students at this point in the year. Students will then read the short story “There Will Come Soft Rains.” Perfectly aligned with the unit’s theme of “beyond reality,” this text is taught alongside a skill lesson in theme, with a focus on setting, and story structure.

Additionally, we have grouped “How Hare Drank Boiling Water and Married the Beautiful Princess” and *Children of Blood and Bone*. After reading these selections, students should be able to talk about the ways in which fantastical elements can guide readers through complex life experiences. “How Hare Drank Boiling Water and Married the Beautiful Princess” may challenge students who are unfamiliar with traditional African folklore; however these challenges can be offset by a discussion of the genre. *Children of Blood and Bone* will remind students of texts they have read in previous units and fits in with the unit’s theme perfectly. Students will complete skill lessons in point of view and story structure.

Throughout this unit students will read texts of similar theme and difficulty. *The War of the Worlds* is one of the highest Lexile texts in the unit, however a StudySyncTV episode and the exciting nature of the text should keep students engaged. “Everybody Out,” an essay from *What If*, will challenge students by including specific vocabulary, such as scientific, mathematical, and technical terms. These difficulties will be offset by a skill lesson on technical language and summarizing. The poem “Spaceships” is thematically linked to the other texts in this unit, and students should be able to recognize the various features of the genre as this point in the year. When reading the “Universal Declaration of Human Rights,” which has the highest lexile, students will have to rely on previous knowledge about World War II and will be asked to focus on the central or main idea.

English Language Learner Resources

Lessons in the English Language Learner Resources section offer explicit ELL 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 Visitor from the Future” and “H. G. Wells: Fiction of the Future,” 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 “There Will Come Soft Rains” and *The War of the Worlds*.

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

After reading texts about imagined futures and science fiction, students will complete an Extended Oral Project which can be used in place of or as an extension to the Extended Writing Project. In this unit, students will plan and present a group research project about a science fiction or fantasy author.

Manuel and the Magic Fox

AUTHOR	Name	Ekaterina Sedia
	Gender	Female
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	2006
	Genre	Fiction
	Access Complex Text Features	<p>Genre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students may be unfamiliar with trickster tales. Such tales are common among Native American groups and also are seen in Japan and other cultures. A brief overview of magical realism may be helpful to students. <p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> References to Japanese relocation camps, Native American reservations, and WWII Navajo code talkers may need to be explained. <p>Connection of Ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students may struggle to connect the details about the various cultural influences on the characters' lives, such as Navajo folk tales and Catholic practices. The connections drawn between Native American reservations and Japanese relocation camps may challenge readers.
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Lexile®	810
	Word Count	3,574
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Making Inferences, Theme
	Close Read Prompt	Literary Analysis: Describe Tomiko from “Manuel and the Magic Fox” and how the reactions and responses of this character develop a theme in the text. How does Tomiko behave? How do her interactions with other characters and events reveal a theme in the story? Be sure to include evidence from the text in your response.
BEYOND THE BOOK	Beyond the Book Activity	<p>Art: Retold As a Graphic Story</p> <p>Students will transform the events from this folktale into a graphic story combining text with drawings.</p> <p>Ask students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Divide the story into sections (e.g., Manuel’s walk home, his first meeting with the fox, etc.). Create a draft of a storyboard with quick sketches depicting each scene using the description from the folktale to inform the artwork. Select dialogue from the excerpt to include in the graphic story. Decide which scenes need captions. <p>Once students have completed a rough draft of their storyboards, they should take their rough sketches and turn them into a polished graphic story complete with colorful illustrations and text adapted from the folktale. Students can use pen and paper or an online comic creator to create their stories.</p>
UNIT CONNECTION	Connect to Essential Question	Ekaterina Sedia’s fantasy story, “Manuel and the Magic Fox,” is derived from Native American and Japanese trickster tales. In what ways can its fantastical elements guide readers through the complex life experiences they encounter in today’s world?
	Connect to Extended Writing Project	Students can find inspiration from “Manuel and the Magic Fox” when doing research for their projects. Have students research folktales and their influences on science fiction and fantasy.

The Dark Is Rising

AUTHOR	Name	Susan Cooper
	Gender	Female
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1973
	Genre	Fiction
	Access Complex Text Features	<p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The story is set in England. References to the British landscape and the Thames may need to be explained. Students may benefit from an overview of the role of magical music and ancient forests in folklore and mythology. <p>Genre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The author uses mythology and time travel to create a fantasy novel, moving the character to a different time period using magic. Students may need help following the action. <p>Specific Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Archaic vocabulary, British spellings (<i>realised, grey</i>), and unfamiliar words (<i>hummocked</i>) may need explaining or defining. Using context clues in the text or a dictionary can help students define unfamiliar words.
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Lexile®	1000
	Word Count	1,204
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	N/A
	Close Read Prompt	<p>Narrative: Following Susan Cooper’s writing style, create a scene in which a character wakes up one morning and finds his or her world transformed as abruptly as Will’s. How do the character’s motivations and behaviors influence events in this new world?</p>
BEYOND THE BOOK	Beyond the Book Activity	<p>Activity: Midwinter Day Soundtrack</p> <p>Will is woken by music. Students will break this excerpt into three parts and select music they believe matches the emotion and action in each part.</p> <p>Break students into pairs and ask each pair to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reread the excerpt and break it into three parts. Each part should have a distinct emotion, tempo, and action that can be represented by a song or piece of music. Select a song they believe matches each part of the story. Write a 4–6 sentence paragraph for each song analyzing how the lyrics, instruments, tempo, and/or rhythm match that section of the text. <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How might the music you selected change the way a person would interpret or react to this scene if the music was played as they read the excerpt?
UNIT CONNECTION	Connect to Essential Question	In an excerpt from the novel <i>The Dark Is Rising</i> , a boy is awakened by mysterious music and discovers that his whole world has changed in an instant. Readers follow Will as he ventures out to explore his new world. What do the changes reveal about Will, and how will they affect his life?
	Connect to Extended Writing Project	Students can use the novel <i>The Dark Is Rising</i> as a resource in their Extended Writing Project. Students may wish to research Susan Cooper to find out what influenced her to write this fantasy novel.

There Will Come Soft Rains (IR)

AUTHOR	Name	Sara Teasdale
	Gender	Female
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	920
	Genre	Poetry
	Access Complex Text Features	<p>Genre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students may benefit from an overview of poetry terms and structure. For instance, this poem has six stanzas and uses a regular rhyme scheme and meter. Students may also benefit from a short introduction to lyric poetry. Lyric poetry expresses strong personal emotions. This poem develops themes related to the power of nature. <p>Connection of Ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students must link ideas across stanzas to fully understand the poem. They must also connect the parenthetical phrase that appears under the title to the ideas within the stanzas. <p>Purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The author challenges readers to think about human actions, especially those related to war, in relation to the simple beauty of nature. Students may struggle to identify this theme.
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Lexile®	N/A
	Word Count	93
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	N/A
	Close Read Prompt	Personal Response: Poet Sara Teasdale writes about the seasonal rebirth of nature during a time of war. What is the theme of this poem? Concentrate on the last two lines of the poem. How do these lines affect how you feel about the poem's overall meaning?
BEYOND THE BOOK	Beyond the Book Activity	<p>Writing: Short Story Inspired by Poetry</p> <p>Ray Bradbury was inspired by Sara Teasdale's poem "There Will Come Soft Rains." Students will select another poem written by Teasdale and use it as inspiration for an original short story.</p> <p>Ask students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research Sara Teasdale's poetry. Select a poem they find interesting or powerful. Use the theme(s) and the language of the poem to inspire a short story. Draft the arc of their short story prior to writing. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exposition: Where is the story set? Who are the main characters? Conflict and rising action: What is the conflict or problem driving the action? Who or what is involved in this conflict? Climax: When does the conflict reach its most intense point? Resolution: How is the conflict resolved? What happens to the characters? <p>Next, have students write their stories weaving in details and language from the poem.</p>
UNIT CONNECTION	Connect to Essential Question	The excerpt is followed by Sara Teasdale's "There Will Come Soft Rains," an anti-war statement in the guise of a lyric poem devoted to nature.
	Connect to Extended Writing Project	Students can use "There Will Come Soft Rains" as a resource for their Extended Writing Project. They may wish to research why Sara Teasdale wrote the poem, or how the poem influenced science fiction writer Ray Bradbury.

There Will Come Soft Rains

AUTHOR	Name	Ray Bradbury
	Gender	Male
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1950
	Genre	Fiction
	Access Complex Text Features	<p>Organization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students may find it unusual that the story has so many short, descriptive paragraphs. • Students will benefit from knowing that the events are arranged in chronological order according to the hours in a day, beginning with seven o'clock on August 4, 2026. By dawn of the next morning, the house is destroyed. <p>Sentence Structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The sentences are short, as if the clock is making announcements of the hours and activities of each hour. • Rereading may be necessary to understand the plot that unfolds through the brief descriptions of the many events of the day. <p>Genre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The story is science fiction, with a post-apocalyptic subgenre. • Students should be aware that science fiction often has lessons for humans that are appropriate for the real world. This story has a message about nuclear war.
	Lexile®	890
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Word Count	2,096
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Theme, Story Structure
	Close Read Prompt	<p>Compare and Contrast: Think about the structure, including the order of events and conflict, in the novel excerpt from <i>The Dark Is Rising</i>, Sara Teasdale's poem, and Ray Bradbury's short story. Explain how the structures compare and contrast, and how the structure relates to the meaning and style of each text. Cite evidence from each text to support your ideas.</p>
BEYOND THE BOOK	Beyond the Book Activity	<p>Research Project: Robots and Artificial Intelligence</p> <p>Students will research how technology, robotics, and artificial intelligence are impacting a specific sector, like education, cars, or the film industry.</p> <p>Break students into small groups and have them:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select a particular aspect of our lives that has been impacted by technology—communication, education, transportation, or publication. • Research the impact that technological advances, robotics, and artificial intelligence have had on that sector. • Design a multimedia presentation to present your research to the class. • Rehearse the presentation to ensure that each group member is prepared to present his or her part. • Present to the class. <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on the information you learned during the presentations, is there anything happening today that you think might concern or worry Bradbury?
	Connect to Essential Question	Those two selections, to be read independently by students, introduce Ray Bradbury's classic science fiction story "There Will Come Soft Rains," which shares its title with Teasdale's poem. The story imagines a robot-infused world that humans no longer inhabit.
UNIT CONNECTION	Connect to Extended Writing Project	Students can find inspiration from the short story "There Will Come Soft Rains" when crafting their research projects. Have students research Ray Bradbury's sources for his story idea.

The War of the Worlds

AUTHOR	Name	H.G. Wells
	Gender	Male
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1898
	Genre	Fiction
	Access Complex Text Features	<p>Genre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Published in 1897 in serial form, this novel is written as though it is happening in real life. Students would benefit from knowing that this is a work of fiction. Readers familiar with more contemporary science fiction should be aware that the story uses less advanced technology and relies more on readers' imaginations. <p>Sentence Structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The writing style is complex, reflecting the style of the time. Students may want to break sentences down into smaller pieces or paraphrase as they read.
		<p>Specific Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> British spellings, such as <i>realising</i>, and words such as <i>forthwith</i>, <i>cabmen</i>, and <i>hoofs</i>, reflect the time period and may need to be explained to students. Certain terms, such as <i>gride</i> in the paragraph 7, may need explanation. <i>Gride</i> means "to scrape or graze and produce a harsh rasping sound."
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Lexile®	1200
	Word Count	1,484
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Language, Style, and Audience, Greek and Latin Affixes and Roots
	Close Read Prompt	<p>Literary Analysis: When authors undertake the task of writing a story in the science fiction genre, they can use their imaginations to create almost anything. Think about some specific words and phrases used by the first-person narrator of <i>The War of the Worlds</i>. How do the figurative and connotative meanings of some of these words help to produce a certain tone of both fear and suspense? Use evidence from the text to support your ideas.</p>
BEYOND THE BOOK	Beyond the Book Activity	<p>Photo Essay: The Extraterrestrials Have Landed!</p> <p>Science fiction movies have treated the topic of extraterrestrials visiting Earth in many different ways, from the friendly visitors in <i>E.T.</i> and <i>Close Encounters of the Third Kind</i> to the unfriendly aliens in <i>Independence Day</i> and <i>War of the Worlds</i>. To engage students in discussing the plots and themes of these and other films that feature extraterrestrials that visit Earth, have them do the following:</p> <p>Choose a film in which the plot centers around extraterrestrials visiting Earth. It could be a fairly recent film or one made decades ago, such as <i>The Day the Earth Stood Still</i> or <i>Cocoon</i>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do research on the characters in the film and the events of the plot. Locate several photographs on the Internet that depict these characters and highlight important plot events. <p>Write a caption to explain the details of the event and the identity of the characters shown in each photo. Then use them to provide a summary of the plot.</p> <p>Display the photos and captions. To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What do the photos and captions make you think about? How might you describe the characters in each film?
	UNIT CONNECTION	Connect to Essential Question
Connect to Extended Writing Project		Students can use <i>The War of the Worlds</i> as a resource for their Extended Writing Project. They may wish to conduct research on H. G. Wells and his writing process to see what inspired him to write this science fiction novel.

Everybody Out (from ‘What If?’)

AUTHOR	Name	Randall Munroe
	Gender	Male
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	2014
	Genre	Informational
	Access Complex Text Features	<p>Specific Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This informational essay has scientific, mathematical, and technical terms that will challenge readers. Suggest that students focus first on the general ideas and concepts.
		<p>Genre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students need to understand that this scientific essay deals with a theoretical problem and that there is no immediate need to abandon Earth. The writer uses math and science to determine an answer to the evacuation question based on knowledge we have today, and he challenges us to imagine the possibilities. <p>Purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The purpose of the essay necessitates the use of mathematical formulas to explore a way to evacuate all humans from Earth. Focus students’ attention on how writers of science fiction and scientists explore questions about survival, space, and the evacuation of Earth.
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Lexile®	1250
	Word Count	1,116
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Generating Questions, Technical Language, Summarizing
	Close Read Prompt	Informative: Summarize the author’s analysis that pursues an answer to the hypothetical question: “Is there enough energy to move the entire human population off Earth?” Use evidence from the text in your summary, and keep your summary objective.
BEYOND THE BOOK	Beyond the Book Activity	<p>Activity: Everyone In</p> <p>Students will answer the question: Is there enough available room below Earth’s surface to move the entire current human population underground?</p> <p>Break students into small groups and ask them to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Imagine there is a threat to the human race that requires every single human being to seek shelter underground temporarily. Research existing underground spaces—caves, tunnels, and subways—to understand what types of underground spaces exist. Research the human population—total numbers, height, and weight—to determine how much space is needed. Develop an answer that combines simple stick figures and information gathered in their research. Prepare a short explanation of their findings. <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What was most surprising information you found during your research?
UNIT CONNECTION	Connect to Essential Question	In this nonfiction text, author Randall Munroe uses real-world science and math to test a premise that is common to many science fiction works: the emergency evacuation of planet Earth. Munroe sets out to determine whether or not it would actually be possible to move all human beings off the planet using only our current technologies. What does the imagined scenario of planetary evacuation teach the author and readers about the real world?
	Connect to Extended Writing Project	Students can use “Everybody Out” as a research resource for their Extended Writing Project. They may adopt some of Randall Munroe’s use of experiments or approaches to help prove a thesis or demonstrate an idea.

Spaceships

AUTHOR	Name	Derrick Harriell
	Gender	Male
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	2017
	Genre	Poetry
	Access Complex Text Features	<p>Genre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students may find it challenging that the poem consists of free verse, varied line lengths and meter, unusual imagery, and the first-person plural <p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The setting of this poem, around the late 1970s, may be unfamiliar to readers and require additional explanation. The speakers' view of adults and large cars as "cool" may need additional support. <p>Connection of Ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Readers will need to connect the images in the poem, including the much-admired uncles, their large Chevrolets, and the idea of extraterrestrials to make meaning from the poem.
	Lexile®	N/A
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Word Count	90
	Skill Lessons	Context Clues
READER AND TASKS	Close Read Prompt	<p>Poetry: Using the poem "Spaceships" as a guide, write your own poem about a spaceship, using words or phrases that are either unfamiliar to the reader or hold a different meaning in the context of the poem. Then write a reflection as to why a poet might follow such a scheme, citing evidence from "Spaceships" to support your response. In your reflection, explain how using context clues can help the reader infer the meaning of a word or phrase in your poem.</p>
	Beyond the Book Activity	<p>Writing: Aliens</p> <p>Students will think about someone or something in their lives that is alien or otherworldly and write a poem about this person or thing.</p> <p>Ask students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the subject of their poem. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What person or thing do they want to focus on? How might this thing or person seem "alien"? Like Harriell, students should use space imagery and metaphors to highlight how the subject of their poem is different or otherworldly. Decide if they want the poem to be free verse or to follow a specific rhyme scheme. Include rich sensory details and use language to reveal how they feel about this person or thing. Publish their poems. <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why did you select the subject of your poem? In what way is this person or thing different or otherworldly?
UNIT CONNECTION	Connect to Essential Question	In this poem, the speaker expresses his admiration of his uncles and their cars by comparing them to aliens and spaceships. How does the comparison to beings from an imagined world help the speaker better understand his own world?
	Connect to Extended Writing Project	Students can use "Spaceships" as inspiration for their Extended Writing Project. The extended metaphor of cars carrying uncles like spaceships carry aliens may suggest a topic or resources for their research projects.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

AUTHOR	Name	The United Nations Commission on Human Rights
	Gender	N/A
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1948
	Genre	Informational
	Access Complex Text Features	<p>Prior knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tell students that this document was created shortly after World War II, during which millions of people died, including during the Holocaust. Eleanor Roosevelt played a key role in creating this document. Her late husband, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, had outlined some of the ideas in his Four Freedoms speech. <p>Organization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The structure of the Declaration, especially the preamble and articles, was influenced by the Napoleonic Code enacted in France in 1804 to unite local customs and laws into one civil code. Students may struggle with the longer articles, some of which contain more than one part.
		<p>Connection of Ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarify that the articles are intended to relate to people of all nations, creeds, religions, and ethnicities. Suggest that students consider whether there are situations in which the principles should not apply.
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Lexile®	1380
	Word Count	1,772
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Central or Main Idea, Language, Style, and Audience
	Close Read Prompt	<p>Discussion: Science fiction and fantasy often offer warnings to the human race, asking the question, “What if . . . ?” Many organizations, such as the United Nations, try to do the same thing. Why would it be necessary to draft and implement a document like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights? Choose one or two articles from the Declaration to compare to at least one text from this unit. How do texts from this unit support the central idea of the articles of the Declaration? Cite specific evidence from the texts you choose to support your discussion.</p>
BEYOND THE BOOK	Beyond the Book Activity	<p>Game: How would you respond?</p> <p>Debate: Is the United States in Compliance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights?</p> <p>Students will consider the extent to which the United States complies with the 30 Articles in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.</p> <p>Ask students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reread the 30 Articles in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and choose one to research. Decide on a position in relation to the debate question. Research their topic, collecting credible information to use in their debates. Build an argument to support their point of view with a clear claim, compelling evidence, and a thoughtful explanation. Be prepared to engage in a debate with a classmate on this topic. <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are there other countries doing a better job than the United States in complying with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights?
UNIT CONNECTION	Connect to Essential Question	The United Nations Commission on Human Rights was an international committee chaired by Eleanor Roosevelt. Forty-eight nations worked together to create the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in the hopes of preventing atrocities like those that occurred during the Holocaust from ever happening again. How can imagining a world that values equality and shared rights help people handle real problems?
	Connect to Extended Writing Project	Students can use “Universal Declaration of Human Rights” as a resource for their Extended Writing Project. They may wish to research the work behind it or find out ways in which the document has influenced writers and others.

How the Hare Drank Boiling Water and Married the Beautiful Princess

AUTHOR	Name	Raouf Mama
	Gender	Male
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	2000
	Genre	Fiction
	Access Complex Text Features	<p>Genre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The story is an example of African folklore. African folklore is an oral tradition of telling stories that are passed from generation to generation. Most often, these stories contain a moral or a message that generations to come may learn from. Explain that works of African folklore often contain a trickster who learns or teaches a lesson. This genre of literature often features animals that have the ability to speak and communicate using human language. The stories generally take place in Africa. <p>Specific Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difficult vocabulary, such as <i>realm</i> (a kingdom) and <i>clamored</i> (a group of people yelling and making demands), 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	1,138
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	N/A
	Close Read Prompt	<p>Discussion: How do the events and actions in “How Hare Drank Boiling Water and Married the Beautiful Princess” reveal aspects of Hare’s character? What quality of character does he have? Discuss these questions with a group of your peers. Support your ideas with evidence from the text. After your discussion, you will write a reflection in the space below.</p>
BEYOND THE BOOK	Beyond the Book Activity	<p>In his story “How Hare Drank Boiling Water and Married the Beautiful Princess,” Raouf Mama provides the reader with a moral. A moral is a life lesson learned.</p> <p>Ask students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify a life lesson they have learned that has helped them lead a happier life or a life lesson they wish they had learned earlier. Use that life lesson to inspire a poem. Write their own 12 line poems about how to live life. Rehearse their poems in preparation for a spoken word poetry battle. Assign each student a number and draw random pairs who will compete against one another in the battle. <p>After each performance, students will anonymously vote for their favorite spoken word poetry performance to determine a winner.</p> <p>To reflect, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was it more challenging to identify a life lesson or write the poem? What did you notice about the strongest performances? What did they have in common? What made them stand out?
UNIT CONNECTION	Connect to Essential Question	In the African fable “How Hare Drank Boiling Water and Married the Beautiful Princess,” men and animals alike try to meet the challenge a king sets out for his daughter’s hand in marriage.
	Connect to Extended Writing Project	Students can find inspiration from the fantasy aspects in “How Hare Drank Boiling Water and Married the Beautiful Princess” for their research projects about the impact of science fiction or fantasy on the world.

Children of Blood and Bone

AUTHOR	Name	Tomi Adeyemi
	Gender	Female
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	2018
	Genre	Fiction
	Access Complex Text Features	<p>Prior Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nigerian author Tomi Adeyemi wrote this story about a teenage girl named Zélie who lives in Orísha, a fantasy world that emulates West Africa. Orísha was a land once filled with magic, but King Saran has been conducting raids to rid the community of all magic, thus killing Zélie’s mother. Zélie is of the diviner class, one who is skilled in magic, and must complete the challenging task of fighting Yemi in order to prove her worth. <p>Specific Vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difficult vocabulary, such as <i>kaftan</i> (a robe or tunic) and <i>subtle</i> (muted), may need defining. Remind students to use context clues while reading, and also to use a dictionary to define unfamiliar words.
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Lexile®	830
	Word Count	1,201
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Point of View, Story Structure
	Close Read Prompt	<p>Compare and Contrast: Although “How Hare Drank Boiling Water and Married the Beautiful Princess” and <i>Children of Blood and Bone</i> were both inspired by African culture, the points of view in the stories greatly differ. Compare and contrast the points of view of the narrators in the texts. How much do they know or reveal? Does this create suspense or humor? Cite evidence from each text in your response.</p>
BEYOND THE BOOK	Beyond the Book Activity	<p>In the excerpt from <i>Children of Blood and Bone</i> and the story “How Hare Drank Boiling Water and Married the Beautiful Princess,” the main characters each leave a legacy. 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 legacy they want to create.</p> <p>Ask students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Think about the legacy they would like to leave behind. Prepare a 60-second elevator speech that clearly and concisely articulates their purpose in life and describes the legacy they want to leave behind. 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 your purpose in life? Why do so many people hope to leave a legacy after they retire? How might setting goals help you to eventually create a legacy?
UNIT CONNECTION	Connect to Essential Question	In an excerpt from the novel <i>Children of Blood and Bone</i> , a young girl with magical powers in an imaginary West African land must spar with a scornful noble-born.
	Connect to Extended Writing Project	Students can find inspiration from <i>Children of Blood and Bone</i> when writing their research paper about science fiction. Have them reflect on the unit’s essential question about “other worlds” in this novel excerpt to get inspired to research a topic.

ELA Grade Level Overview

Grade 8

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, research, and argumentative. 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 TN ELA 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 a myriad of 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: Everyone Loves a Mystery	UNIT 2: Past and Present	UNIT 3: No Risk, No Reward
Essential Question	What attracts us to the mysterious?	What makes you, you?	Why do we take chances?
Writing Form	Narrative	Argumentative	Informative
Extended Writing Project Prompt	Use the techniques you've learned in this unit to write your own suspenseful narrative. Your characters may experience suspense in a familiar place or while they're with people they know and trust. Perhaps the fear comes from an everyday object or situation.	Examine the texts from this unit and select three powerful metaphors that deepen our understanding of identity and belonging. Your analysis should explain each metaphor and make an argument about how the metaphor reveals something about each speaker, character, or author.	Choose three informational texts from this unit, including research links in the Blasts, and explain how the authors inform readers about their risk-taking subjects. Identify the risks individuals take and the outcomes of those risks. Include a clear main idea or thesis statement, and cite evidence from each text to explain your conclusions.
Extended Writing Project Mentor Texts	The Tell-Tale Heart; The Lottery; The Conjure-Man Dies: A Mystery Tale of Dark Harlem; Ten Days in a Mad-House; The Monkey's Paw	So where are you from?; Curtain Call; Michelle Obama's Commencement Address to the Santa Fe Indian School; What makes you, you? (Big Idea Blast)	A Kenyan Teen's Discovery; Let There Be Lights to Save the Lions; Phineas Gage: A Gruesome but True Story About Brain Science; Address to the Nation on the Explosion of the Space Shuttle Challenger; A Night to Remember; No Risk, No Reward (Big Idea Blast)
Extended Writing Project Process Steps	Plan; Draft; Revise; Edit and Publish	Plan; Draft; Revise; Edit and Publish	Plan; Draft; Revise; Edit and Publish
Writing Skills	Organize Narrative Writing, Story Beginnings, Narrative Techniques, Descriptive Details, 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	Basic Spelling Rules I, Dashes, Commas After Transitions	Active and Passive Voice, Verb Moods, Consistent Verb Voice and Mood	Participles, Gerunds, Infinitives

Writing Task Chart

	UNIT 4: Hear Me Out	UNIT 5: Trying Times	UNIT 6: Beyond Reality
Essential Question	How do you choose the right words?	Who are you in a crisis?	What do imagined worlds teach us about our own?
Writing Form	Argumentative	Oral Presentation	Research
Extended Writing Project Prompt	“Actions speak louder than words” is a popular saying, but is that statement always true? Based on the selections that you have read, do you agree that actions always speak louder than words? If so, why do words matter? Your analysis should state your claim about the popular saying and make an argument about the importance of words.	Think about issues that are important to you, and consider what the people and characters you have read about in this unit can teach you about those issues. Taking inspiration from three of those individuals, prepare and deliver a speech in which you advocate a position on a topic you care about. Include claims, reasons, and relevant evidence from your personal experience and the selections to support your position.	Select an author from the unit, one of the texts, or the subject of one of the texts that you would like to know more about. Then 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.
Extended Writing Project Mentor Texts	Gaming Does Not Promote Positive Communication; My Very Dear Wife; Tim Schafer’s Cover Letter to LucasArts; Speech to the Ohio Women’s Conference: Ain’t I a Woman?; Gaming Helps Develop Communication Skills	Elie Wiesel’s Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech	The Heroes We Deserve (Blast); Everybody Out
Extended Writing Project Process Steps	Plan; Draft; Revise; Edit and Publish	Plan; Draft; Revise; Edit and Present	Plan; Draft; Revise; Edit and Present
Writing Skills	Organizing Argumentative Writing, Thesis Statement, 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 Note-Taking, Critiquing Research, Paraphrasing, Sources and Citations, Print and Graphic Features
Grammar Skills	Parentheses, Brackets and Ellipses for Omission, Commas for Pause or Separation, Basic Spelling Rules II	Writing for Effect, Participial Phrases, Gerund Phrases, Run-On Sentences	Infinitive Phrases, Commonly Misspelled Words, Ellipses for Pause or Separation, Sentence Fragments

 **WRITING****UNIT 1: EVERYONE LOVES A MYSTERY**

The Extended Writing Project (EWP) in Grade 8, Unit 1 focuses on narrative writing. Students probe the unit’s essential question—What attracts us to the mysterious?—as they write an original narrative. The prompt for this EWP asks students to write a suspenseful narrative about what happens when fear comes from an unlikely source. The suspenseful and mysterious selections in this unit provide a context for students, and the multiple pieces of fiction 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, editing, and publishing. 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 writing changes and improves over time.

The skill lesson on Organizing Narrative Writing teaches 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 to develop their unique voices. Revision lessons lead 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 TN ELA 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 “Sympathy,” students are asked to write a response that analyzes their feelings about the poem’s imagery, while the prompt for “The Graveyard Book” asks them to write a response about whether or not the text matched their expectations based on the selection’s title. Close Read prompts specifically ask students to conduct a focused analysis using the skills taught in conjunction with those texts. After students read “Ten Days in a Mad-House,” they use the techniques from the Compare and Contrast skill lesson to write an account that combines yet contrasts the experiences of the speaker of “Sympathy” with that of Nellie Bly in terms of imprisonment. Later in the unit, students analyze the use of plot to create suspense in “The Monkey’s Paw.”

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 exploring background information and 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, reflect, and 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 Narrative Techniques lesson, they practice writing use narrative techniques to develop one scene from the story based on five items from the classroom. In each Close Read, students write to reflect on the text before they engage in a collaborative conversation and write their short constructed response.

 **WRITING****UNIT 2: PAST AND PRESENT**

Literary analysis is the focus of the Extended Writing Project (EWP) in Grade 8, Unit 2. The unit’s essential question—What makes you, you?—will guide students as they write a literary analysis. The prompt for this EWP asks students to write a literary analysis that examines how metaphors can deepen our understanding of identity and belonging. In their analyses, students will explain each metaphor and what it reveals about each speaker, character, or author throughout the unit. The texts in this unit are tied together by the theme of individuality and ground students understanding of each selection. The multiple genres 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, editing, and publishing. During 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 writing changes and improves over time.

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

Students 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 “Inside Out and Back Again,” students are asked to write a detailed personal narrative about a location in their lives, while the prompt for “Theories of Time and Space” asks them to write a poem about a personal journey. Close Read prompts specifically ask students to conduct a focused analysis using the skills taught in conjunction with those texts. After students read “The Road Not Taken,” they use the techniques from the Poetic Elements and Structure skill lesson to explore how this text, “Inside Out and Back Again,” and “Theories of Time and Space” use figurative language in order to write their own poem. Earlier in the unit, after reading the poem “I’m Nobody! Who are you?,” students create a poem to include rhyme, rhythm, meter, and at least two stanzas.

There are several writing tasks throughout the unit that allows students to write in other genres and for different audiences. Blasts throughout the unit allow students to practice sharing their opinions about what poetry can accomplish and their own life stories, 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 complete a thesis outline, and in the Reasons and Relevant Evidence lesson, they practice by creating a dialogue convincing another student to join a club. In each Close Read, students write to reflect on the text before they engage in a collaborative conversation and write their short constructed response.

 **WRITING****UNIT 3: NO RISK, NO REWARD**

The Extended Writing Project (EWP) in Grade 8, Unit 3 focuses on informative writing. Students explore the unit’s essential question—Why do we take chances?—as they write an informative essay. The prompt for this EWP asks students to write an essay explaining how the authors featured in this unit inform readers about their risk-taking subjects. The unit’s selections about taking risks provide a context for students, and the informational selections in the unit serve as mentor texts for students to synthesize and attempt. Over the course of the EWP, students engage in the informative writing process with specific lessons for planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. 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 writing changes and improves over time.

The skill lesson on Organizing Informative Writing teaches concepts specifically called out in the Common Core English Language Arts Standards, while additional skill lessons on Thesis Statement, Supporting Details, 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 TN ELA standards. After each skill lesson, students have the opportunity to practice, 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 “Mother to Son,” students write a personal response about an adult who has given them advice, while the prompt for “Learning to Read” asks them to write a discussion plan examining the poem’s themes about freedom. Close Read prompts specifically ask students to conduct a focused analysis using the skills taught in conjunction with those texts. After students read “Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave,” alongside “Mother to Son” and “Learning to Read,” they use the techniques from the Figurative Language skill lesson to think about how all three texts send a message about the importance of education and use language, descriptions, and events to contribute to this message. Later in the unit, students will explore connotation and denotation in the poem “Cocoon.”

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 the role risk plays in innovation, 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, reflect, and practice skills they’re learning. In the skill lesson for Organizing Informative Writing, students practice by writing an outline of their autobiography, and in the Thesis Statement lesson, students write a thesis statement about a local place to visit for a class newsletter. In each Close Read, students write to reflect on the text before they engage in a collaborative conversation and write their short constructed response.

 **WRITING****UNIT 4: HEAR ME OUT**

In Grade 8, Unit 4, the Extended Writing Project (EWP) focuses on argumentative writing. Students will write an original correspondence in response to the unit’s central question: How do you choose the right words? The prompt for this EWP asks students to agree or disagree with the following: Do actions always speak louder than words? If so, why do words matter? The unit’s selections about choosing the right words provide a thematic connection for students, and the informational selections in the unit provide examples and techniques students can analyze and recreate. Over the course of the EWP, students engage in the argumentative writing process with specific lessons for planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. During 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 writing changes and improves over time.

The skill lesson on Organizing Argumentative Writing teaches concepts specifically called out in the Common Core English Language Arts Standards, while additional skill lessons on Reasons and Relevant Evidence, Style, and Transitions focus on characteristics of the argumentative genre of 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 TN ELA standards. After each skill lesson, students have the opportunity to practice, using created student writing, authentic texts, and their own work.

Students will do a good 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 “Denee Benton: Broadway Princess,” students are asked to design a social media hashtag to support a cause, while the prompt for “To America” asks them to write about their personal reactions to the arguments laid out in 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 “The Adventures of Tom Sawyer (Chapter 2),” they use the techniques from the Point of View, Figurative Language, and Allusion skill lessons to write a letter from Tom Sawyer’s point of view trying to persuade a neighbor to hire him for a whitewashing job. Earlier in the unit, students will explore reasons and evidence and analyze language, style, and audience in Sojourner Truth’s “Speech to the Ohio Women’s Conference: Ain’t I a Woman?”

Students are given multiple opportunities to write in other contexts and for other purposes. Blasts throughout the unit allow students to practice sharing their opinions about how massively multiplayer online role-playing games are changing society, 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 completing a thesis outline, and in the Thesis Statement lesson, they identify the thesis statement in a famous speech and write why the author's method of communicating his claim or claims is effective. In each Close Read, students write to reflect on the text before they engage in a collaborative conversation and write their short constructed response.

 **WRITING****UNIT 5: TRYING TIMES**

In Grade 8, 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— Who are you in a crisis? The prompt for this unit’s EOP asks students to prepare and deliver a speech in which they advocate a position on a topic they care about. The unit’s selections about trying times provide a context for students, and the dramatic and fiction 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, editing, and presenting. During 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.

The skill lesson on Organizing an Oral Presentation teaches 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 further model how students should continue creating a presentation and express their ideas orally. We 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 TN ELA 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. The Independent Read and Close Read lessons culminate in a writing or discussion prompt. In the EOP, students reflect on the text or apply the skills they have learned in conjunction with the text by orally presenting their ideas. In the Independent Read “Anne Frank: Diary of a Young Girl,” students write a personal response after a group discussion about World War II, while after reading “America,” students write a reflection following a group discussion about the poem’s symbolism. Close Read prompts specifically ask students to conduct a focused analysis using the skills taught in conjunction with these texts. To learn the particulars of crafting an oral argument, after students read “The Diary of Anne Frank: A Play,” they use the techniques from the Dramatic Elements and Structure skill lesson to dramatize the diary excerpt while comparing the diary and drama versions of Anne Frank’s story in terms of meaning and style. Later in the unit, students watch a StudySync TV episode on “Blood, Toil, Tears and Sweat” 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 the uses of theater, all achieved through student 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 a mock TV news segment, and in the Evaluating Sources lesson, they write about a fake topic, using clues to show that the article is not accurate, credible, reliable, or worth using in a presentation. In each Close Read, students always engage in a collaborative conversation as well as turn and talk activities.

 **WRITING****UNIT 6: BEYOND REALITY**

Research writing is the focus of the Extended Writing Project (EWP) in Grade 8, Unit 6. The unit’s essential question—What do other worlds teach us about our own?—will guide students as they write a research paper. The prompt for this EWP asks students to select an author from the unit, one of the texts, or the subject of one of the texts that they would like to know more about and write a research report about that topic. The selections in this unit ask students to think about other worlds and places, providing a context for students. The informational selections in the unit serve as example texts for students to criticize and imitate. Over the course of the EWP, students engage in the research writing process with specific lessons for planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. 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 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 Note-Taking focus on characteristics of the informative writing genre and help students develop their research papers. Students revise their drafts for clarity, development, organization, word choice, and sentence variety, as they are led through a series of skill lessons. Targeted Grammar Skill lessons instruct to the specific grammar skills identified in the TN ELA standards. After each skill lesson, students have the opportunity to practice the skill 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 “The Dark Is Rising,” students are asked to create a scene following the author’s writing style in which a character wakes up one morning and finds his or her world transformed, while the prompt for “There Will Come Soft Rains (poem)” asks them to write a personal response about the theme of the poem. Close Read prompts specifically ask students to conduct a focused analysis using the skills taught in conjunction with these texts. After students read “There Will Come Soft Rains (short story),” they use the techniques from the Story Structure skill lesson to compare multiple texts and structures and explain how the structures relate to the meaning and style of each text. Later in the unit, students will explore technical language and summarizing while reading “Everybody Out (from ‘What If?’).”

We have included other writing tasks in the unit so students have a chance to write in other genres and contexts. Blasts throughout the unit allow students to practice sharing their opinions about how science fiction can predict the future, 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, reflect, and practice skills they’re learning. In the Planning Research skill lesson, students review the research plan they’ve made for this unit’s EWP, and in the Print and Graphic Features lesson, they draft a one paragraph summary of advice for a journalist who is having trouble writing a short article about one of your favorite activities, such as a hobby or sport. Students will address questions such as the following: How could she organize her ideas into categories? What images, graphics, and multimedia could she include? In each Close Read, students write to reflect on the text before they engage in a collaborative conversation and write their short constructed response.



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