Grade 8 Sampler

Units of Study

in Argument, Information, *and* Narrative Writing

A COMMON CORE WORKSHOP CURRICULUM

Lucy Calkins

with Colleagues from the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project

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HEINEMANN
Dedicated to Teachers

Grade 8 Components

Professional and Classroom Support

A Guide to the Common Core Writing Workshop crystallizes the essential principles, methods, and structures of effective writing workshop instruction.

The *Resources for Teaching Writing* CD-ROM provides unit-specific print resources to support your teaching throughout the year.

Three Units of Study

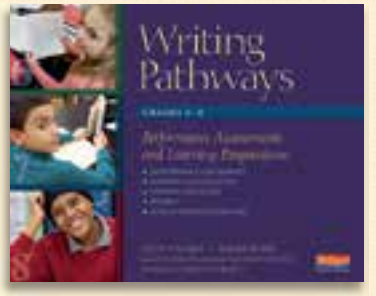
- Are organized around the three types of writing mandated by the Common Core—*argument, information*, and *narrative writing*
- Lay out six weeks of instruction (16–17 sessions) in each unit
- Include all of the teaching points, minilessons, conferences, and small-group work needed to teach a comprehensive workshop curriculum
- Model Lucy and her colleagues' carefully crafted teaching moves and language

Writing Pathways
Performance Assessments and Learning Progressions, Grades 6-8

- Is organized around a continuum of learning progressions across argument, information, and narrative writing
- Includes benchmark student texts, writing checklists, learning progressions, and rubrics

If... Then... Curriculum
Assessment-Based Instruction, Grades 6-8

- Offers nine alternate units of study
- Presents if/then conferring scenarios that support targeted instruction and differentiation



Welcome to this sampler of the Grade 8 components in the Units of Study in Argument, Information, and Narrative Writing series. The first pages of this sampler provide an overview of the units of study. They describe the instructional pathways each unit follows and how this journey is subdivided into bends, or parts. This overview describes how each bend builds on the learning in the previous bend and sets the stage for the learning in the next bend. Likewise, it describes how each larger unit of study builds on the learning in past units and sets the stage for learning in future units and grades. The tables of contents that follow delineate the steps of the journey and map in detail the learning students will see and experience.

The bulk of this sampler is the first bend from Unit 2, *The Literary Essay: Analyzing Craft and Theme*. This bend extends your students' journey into argument writing. This in-depth look allows you to see how learning is progressively built in each unit and how students become immersed in the writing process. In addition to mapping your teaching points, minilessons, conferences, and small-group work, each session also includes Lucy's coaching commentary. In these side-column notes, Lucy is at your side explaining proven strategies, offering professional insight, and coaching you through the nitty-gritty details of teaching.

Also included are samples of the instructional resources that support these core units. *Writing Pathways* shows you the types of learning progressions, checklists, and benchmark writing samples that will help you evaluate your students' work and establish where students are in their writing development. *If… Then… Curriculum* describes the alternate units you can use to enhance or differentiate your instruction. And finally, the samples from the resources CD-ROM show you the wealth of teaching tools that support each unit.

As you review this Grade 8 sampler, it is important to remember that the goal of this series is to model thoughtful, reflective teaching in ways that enable you to extrapolate guidelines and methods, so that you will feel ready to invent your own clear, sequenced, vibrant writing instruction.

Grade 8

"How you teach eighth graders to write literary essays has great ramifications for their school life, because they will be writing about their reading in greater frequency as they advance to high school and college. The skills they develop in the next few weeks can help build a foundation for this critical work."

—Lucy Calkins

- **Units of Study Overview and Contents** *pages 2–10*
- **UNIT 2: The Literary Essay: Analyzing Craft and Theme (Argument Writing)**
  BEND 1: "The Thematic Essay" *pages 11–91*
- ***Writing Pathways: Performance Assessments and Learning Progressions, Grades 6–8*** *pages 92–95*
- ***If... Then... Curriculum: Assessment-Based Instruction, Grades 6–8*** *pages 96–97*
- ***Resources for Teaching Writing* CD-ROM** *pages 98–99*
- **Implementation and Professional Development Options** *page 100*
- **About the Grade 8 Authors** *back cover*

OVERVIEW AND CONTENTS FOR UNIT 1

Investigative Journalism

Mary Ehrenworth and Cornelius Minor

In Bend I, you will teach your students that journalists discern the small dramas around them and shape newscasts to bring the news concisely to their readers. Like professional journalists, students will learn to be on the lookout for the out-of-the-ordinary, for heightened emotion, or for a storyline that occurs underneath the obvious stream of events. In contrast to personal narrative, you will teach students to write in the third person, reporting facts and maintaining a journalistic tone. Finally, to make short writing powerful and engaging, you will teach students techniques journalists use to make their short writing more powerful, such as using striking details, keeping a tight focus on what a story is really about, and writing delightful or clever endings. By the end of this first bend, students will publish their first works of journalism on a class website and you will invite them to offer thoughtful comments on their peers' work.

In Bend II, you will teach students how to craft narrative nonfiction to illuminate social issues and stir their readers to action. You will teach them ways journalists delve more deeply into topics they know well, drawing on everything they know about narrative writing—such as the skills of developing action, dialogue, setting, details—to tell a compelling true story and grab readers' attention. You'll teach students how journalists use tension to push readers toward that truth, and how they elaborate multiple perspectives to reveal complicated stories. This bend ends with another round of publication, as students share their work with one another.

In Bend III, you will teach students ways journalists conduct the in-depth research necessary to support a complex piece of investigative journalism. You'll help students understand that investigative journalists research the context and causes of underlying issues; trace possible implications; and collect facts, statistics, and expert quotes to support their stories. You will help students expand their repertoire of research tools by teaching them how to interview, to create surveys, and to use print and digital texts to gather information for their stories. Finally, you'll teach students ways writers organize pieces into logical sections and ways to craft endings to call readers to action. At the end of the unit, students will finalize their pieces and explore ways to publish in venues such as blogs, class news magazines, or local publications.

Welcome to the Unit

BEND I ✦ Reporting the Real Story: Newscasts

1. **Journalists Develop Their Powers of Observation to Capture Events**
   In this session, you'll teach students that journalists observe the world closely, capturing the who, what, when, where, and why of events within concise and captivating news stories.

2. **Turning Moments of Drama into Cogent Newscasts**
   In this session, you'll teach students that journalists get ideas for news stories by observing the world, looking for the out-of-the-ordinary, for heightened emotion, or for storylines that occurs underneath the main events. They use their observations as starts to newscasts.

3. **Researching and Reporting Experience**
   In this session, you'll teach students that newscasters turn to and research remembered events, but they write differently from personal narrative writers—they write in the third person, telling the facts and maintaining a nonfiction, journalistic tone.

4. **Making Short Nonfiction Writing Pack a Punch**
   In this session, you'll teach students that journalists make short writing powerful by taking advice from nonfiction experts and studying their work.

5. **Setting Ambitious Goals and Working toward Publishing**
   In this session, you'll teach students that experienced writers set ambitious goals and use tools such as checklists to help measure their own progress and achievements.

Bend II ✦ Writing to Inform and Illuminate

6. **Investigating to Reveal Underlying Issues**
   In this session, you'll teach students that journalists investigate issues in their community, putting themselves where these stories are, and crafting these stories to illuminate underlying issues.

7. **Using Narrative Craft to Hone Central Ideas and to Stir Empathy**
   In this session, you will teach students to draw on what they know about writing narrative fiction to help them hone their narrative nonfiction.

8. **Harnessing Narrative and Information Writing Techniques**
   In this session, you'll teach students that journalists write the facts to convey a bigger truth, and they can build tension using narrative and information writing to shuttle readers toward that bigger truth.

9. **Elaborating to Deepen Readers' Connections**
   In this session, you'll teach students that journalists elaborate to deepen readers' connections by considering the connotations of language and crafting allusions and analogies that will suggest associations for their readers.

10. **Writing Partners Have Each Other's Backs**
    In this session, you'll teach students that writers who form strong writing partnerships can strengthen each other's writing and help prepare for publishing by using techniques such as questioning thoughtfully, rehearsing writing, and giving feedback.

11. **Editing Voice and Verb Tense**
    In this session, you'll teach students that journalists edit by deciding on the verb tenses that will create the best voice for the article.

BEND III ✦ Investigative Reporting

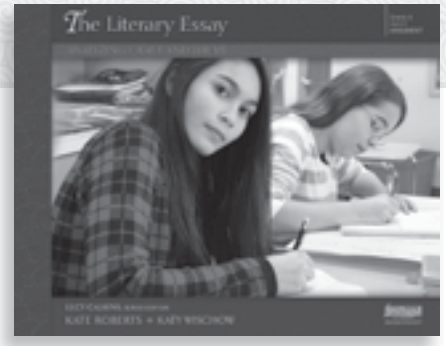
12. **Mentoring Oneself to a Pro to Envision the Arc of Investigative Reporting**
    In this session, you'll teach students that investigative journalists use many techniques to uncover the information to make their stories deeper and more substantial.

13. **Expanding Repertoires of Research Tools**
    In this session, you will teach students that journalists research the perspectives of witnesses, experts, and everyday citizens, and they gather data as additional information about the issue their story introduces.

14. **Structuring Pieces and Leading the Reader with Key Transitions**
    In this session, you will teach students that journalists organize investigative pieces into parts, then use sophisticated transitions to lead their readers from one part to the next.

15. **Crafting Endings That Call Readers to Action**
    In this session, you will teach students that journalists often call their readers to action toward the close of a piece, encouraging them to take the information learned to affect change.

16. **Publishing Writing for Real Audiences**
    In this session, you'll teach students that as they finish their pieces, writers tackle three essential tasks: finalizing writing for deadlines; presenting writing to real audiences; and seeking feedback.



OVERVIEW AND CONTENTS FOR UNIT 2

The Literary Essay
Analyzing Craft and Theme

Kate Roberts and Katy Wischow

In Bend I, you will teach students that when analyzing texts, literary essayists pay attention to plot, character, and the author's crafting decisions, reflecting on the link between the theme and those elements. As students begin drafting their own literary essays, you will guide them to draw on their previous knowledge about writing in this genre, and you will show them how they can examine mentor texts to plan and set goals for their own writing. You will then teach students ways writers use logic to clarify the relationship between their evidence and their ideas. As students continue drafting and revising, you will teach them how to search for other possible interpretations of the text and write arguments about which interpretation is the best one, explaining why an alternative argument may not be as sound. By the end of this first bend, your students will have learned how to complete a draft of a literary essay with a focus on theme.

In Bend II, students will focus on understanding and writing about author's craft moves and how they affect the meaning of the text. You'll teach students that literary essayists look for craft moves that an author uses repeatedly and the effects those moves have on the text. Then you'll channel them to look for symbols in the texts they are studying and, as writers do, write long to try to discover the deeper meaning of the symbols they discover. In the rest of this bend, you'll teach students ways writers plan an essay about an author's craft, teaching them ways to frame the essay with introductions and conclusions that provide context and food for thought, and teaching them ways that essayists adopt an engaging yet formal tone.

In Bend III, you'll push students to compare and contrast ideas across texts, writing to discover and writing to explain and support what they discover. Your students have written this kind of essay in earlier grades; now, you'll encourage them to apply all they know and work more independently, using familiar strategies—such as using thought prompts to push themselves to deeper analysis and using transition words to guide their readers. Your literary essayists end this unit by exploring places online to publish parts of their essays and then making their writing online-ready and posting it.

Welcome to the Unit

BEND I ✦ The Thematic Essay

1. **Looking for Themes All Around Us . . .**
   In this session, you'll remind students that writers are on the lookout for themes in all of the texts they read, and are able to explain, with details from the text, why they believe that theme to be present.

2. **Reading Closely to Develop Themes**
   In this session, you'll teach students that academic writers look closely at a text to further develop their understanding of the text's themes, and then use writing to discover what the whole text is saying about those ideas.

3. **Fine-Tuning Themes by Studying Author's Craft**
   In this session, you'll teach students that when analyzing a text, literary essayists pay attention to the details of the plot and character development as well as the author's crafting decisions, reflecting on the connection between the author's message and his or her craft.

4. **Drafting Essays**
   In this session, you'll teach students that when getting ready to draft, writers recall what they already know about the genre they are writing in, as well as examine mentor texts in that genre, to make a plan and set goals for their writing.

5. **Finding the Courage to Revise Your Thinking**
   In this session, you'll teach students that essay writers often have to stop at the end of a draft and ask themselves: Are all of my original ideas still true? Is there anything I should change? If so, writers then have the courage to revise their thinking.

6. **Clarifying Relationships between Evidence and Ideas**
   In this session, you'll teach students that essayists can use logic, specifically logical sentence frames, to help them clarify the relationship between their evidence and their ideas.

7. **Counterargument within Literary Essays**
   In this session, you'll teach students that essayists look for places where there could be another interpretation or opinion about the text, and they write to try and argue why their interpretation is the best one, by nodding to the alternative argument and then explaining why that one is not as sound.

8. **Editing Using All You Know**
   In this session, you could teach students that writers use all they know and all they have (relying on the resources at their disposal) to put the final touches on their drafts, and that they continue to look for ways to outgrow themselves, this time by lifting the level of their conventions.

BEND II ✦ The Author's Craft Essay

9. **Noticing How an Author Tends to Write**
   In this session, you'll teach students that literary essayists look for craft moves that the author uses repeatedly. Then, essayists write a bit about why they think the author chooses to write in that way and what effect those craft moves have on the text.

10. **The Power of Symbolism**
    In this session, you'll teach students that literary essayists are often on the lookout for one especially powerful craft move that authors use to great effect—symbols. You will teach students to look for this device in their own texts and to write long to discover the deeper meaning behind the symbols they discover.

11. **Planning the Author's Craft Essay**
    In this session, you could teach students that writers of author's craft essays pause and plan how their craft essays will go, and that when they do this they have to choose whether to focus in deeply on one craft move or whether to instead analyze a few they see in the text.

12. **Framing Essays with Relevance and Context: Introductions and Conclusions**
    In this session, you'll teach students that essayists write introductions that explain the text being analyzed and the greater relevance of their essays. They often conclude their essays by leaving their readers with their most powerful thoughts.

13. **Adopting an Essayist's Tone**
    In this session, you'll teach students that writers can adopt an essayist's engaging and formal tone by varying their sentence length and using sophisticated language.

14. **A Comma Inquiry**
    In this session, you could teach students that writers use the comma in multiple ways to make their writing readable, engaging, and strong.

BEND III ✦ The Comparative Essay

15. **Writing across Texts**
    In this session, you'll teach students that literary essayists often write as a way to think about more than one text at a time, pushing themselves to do the work of comparing and contrasting similar ideas across different texts.

16. **Writing Comparative Essays on Demand**
    In this session, you'll teach students that writers have to use all that they know about essays to write not just well but also quickly and with flexibility.

17. **Publishing on the Internet**
    In this session, you could teach students that writers decide where on the Internet they want to publish a portion of their pieces, and then work to make their writing Internet ready.

OVERVIEW AND CONTENTS FOR UNIT 3

Position Papers
Research and Argument

Mary Ehrenworth, Cornelius Minor, and Julie Shepherd

Eighth graders begin this argumentation study by learning to research and argue various stances within a complex topic—in this case, the pros and cons of kids engaging in games with simulated violence. Students will learn to use debate to strengthen their positions, developing and revising claims, reasons, and evidence. They'll learn ways writers flash-draft efficiently, setting ambitious writing goals so that they are constantly honing their arguments and their skills. Students will move from research of print and digital texts to drafting, and then they will return to research, this time with critical lenses. As they research again, you'll teach them how authors use connotative language to paint a tone, and how they might do the same in their own writing. Students will finish Bend I by publishing their position papers in a collection for students and parents and by giving speeches.

In the second bend of this unit, students will learn ways to understand, navigate and develop considered positions within a topic with a complicated history and serious consequences. Specifically, students will argue whether or not child soldiers should be given amnesty, a question that is debated by the United Nations, by US military tribunals, and by advocacy organizations around the world. Students learn ways to tackle a topic of this gravity by immersion in information—researching case studies, statistics, and a variety of print and digital sources. Initially, you will help students use their debate skills and their knowledge of argument writing to compose preliminary position papers. Then you'll teach students that writers take these position papers through multiple drafts, honing their arguments as they extend their knowledge. In this bend, you will teach students ways writers consider multiple perspectives and ways they make their cases stronger by expressing the conditions under which their arguments have merit. As they do this, students will learn to write longer, denser arguments, using more sophisticated transitional moves to guide the reader. You'll coach them to maintain an awareness of purpose and audience. Students will tailor their arguments to their intended audience and then publish these position papers as letters.

At the end of the unit, students reflect on how they can carry their knowledge of argument writing, including the inquiry process, from research to publishing and their skills with debate, across the curriculum. This attention to transference sets students up to be powerful argument writers in other disciplines and in their future endeavors.

Welcome to the Unit

BEND I ✦ Writing a Position Paper: Games Based on Fictional Violence—Diverting or Harmful?

1. **Debating Positions to Develop a Complex Argument**
   In this session, you'll teach students that writers debate different positions on a complicated issue in order to develop an argument that allows for complexity.

2. **Flash-Drafting Arguments while Working on Personal Writing Goals**
   In this session, you'll remind students that writers plan more than what they'll write about; they also plan the writing work that's ahead for them.

3. **Angling Evidence to Support Specific Points**
   In this session, you'll teach students how writers angle their evidence by explaining it fully, showing how the evidence illustrates or supports specific points.

4. **Using Connotative Language to Paint a Tone**
   In this session, you'll teach students that nonfiction writers make their case and advance their ideas, not just with evidence but with the words they choose.

5. **Writing Great Conclusions**
   In this session, you'll remind students that writers turn to familiar strategies for writing powerful conclusions, such as restating a claim, offering insights, and leaving readers with memorable ideas or a call to action.

6. **Getting Ready to Publish: Polishing Presentation and Conventions**
   In this session, you could teach students that writers polish their presentations on their own, using mentor texts, checklists, and digital editing tools, and then they turn to other writers/experts for help.

7. **Unleashing the Inner Dramatist to Give Speeches More Impact**
In this session, you'll teach students that speechwriters rehearse their arguments, using breath support, tone of voice, body language, and gestures to emphasize their points and stir their audience.

8. **A Celebration of Speeches**
In this session, you could teach students that for arguments to work, people must feel connected to them; to foster that connection to audiences, writers may use humor, personal anecdotes, and/or compelling research.

BEND II ✦ Writing a Position Paper on a Complicated Issue: Should Child Soldiers Be Given Amnesty?

9. **Grappling with Issues of Intensity, Developing Initial Understanding**
In this session, you'll teach students that when writers grapple with intense issues, they don't just dive into argument; instead, they read, write, and discuss to begin understanding a complex, difficult topic.

10. **Developing Preliminary Positions, Revising Thinking**
In this session, you could teach students that argument is about continually revising your position in light of new evidence and ideas, in order to do justice to the complexity of an issue.

11. **Debating to Draft More Balanced and Principled Arguments**
In this session, you'll teach students that researching and acknowledging all angles of a topic, especially when debating, is essential to growing a richer understanding of the issue.

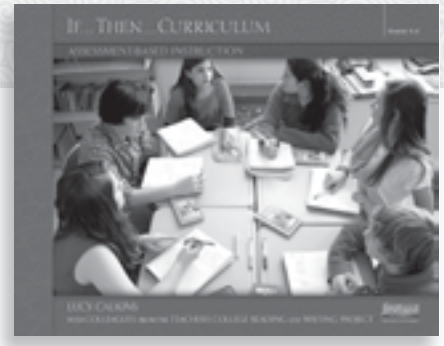
12. **Strengthening, Framing, and Pacing Evidence**
In this session, you'll remind students that to support their arguments, writers choose evidence that is the most relevant, significant, and convincing they can find, and then they plan how to explain that evidence and how it might unfold across a piece.

13. **Attending to Alternate Arguments and Points of View**
In this session, you'll teach students that writers study alternatives to their own point of view in order to better understand complex issues, attend to counterarguments, and strengthen their own arguments.

14. **Using the Organizational Structure of Your Piece to Help Build Your Argument**
In this session, you'll teach students that writers use organizational structure to help build arguments and also to lead readers to follow their thinking.

15. **Tailoring Position Papers as Letters; Attending to Audience and Presentation**
In this session, you could teach students that when writers write letters, they define their audience and tailor their letters to fit that audience, and they also work to perfect presentation and conventions.

16. **A Social Activist Celebration**
In this session, you could teach students that argument writers are able to take positions on complex issues and explain them clearly and convincingly—and this writing can fuel social activism and change.



CONTENTS

If... Then... Curriculum
Assessment-Based Instruction, Grades 6–8

Lucy Calkins with Colleagues from the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project

Introduction: Middle School Writers and Planning Your Year

Alternative and Additional Units

1. Writing Information Books on Topics of Personal Expertise

IF your students have not been part of writing workshop classrooms prior to now and they have not had any experience writing informational texts, THEN you may want to teach this unit. This unit provides foundational teaching and learning about information writing that students will need before attempting more complex units such as research-based information writing. This unit invites students to draw from their own areas of personal expertise to create lively, voice-filled information books. Choose this unit if you'd like your students to experience firsthand that information writing need not be bland or tedious to create; it can be filled with opportunities for choice, engagement, and exploration. This unit will support all middle school writers in reaching toward the demands of the Common Core in information writing.

2. Fiction Writing

IF your sixth grade students display a solid understanding of personal narrative writing and you want them to develop their skills in writing realistic fiction, THEN you may want to teach this unit. This unit will support sixth grade writers in learning to craft and revise integral scenes, to create well-developed characters that respond to conflict in realistic ways, and to use tension and pacing to draw readers into their unfolding plot. If you choose to teach this alongside fiction reading, this unit will particularly build reading-writing connections. This unit will support all middle school writers in reaching toward the demands of the Common Core in narrative writing.

3. Persuasive Essays

IF your students are new to the genre of argument writing, or if they would benefit from additional practice in writing persuasively, THEN you may want to teach this unit. This unit introduces students to the foundational skills of persuasive writing and then quickly builds on those in more ambitious ways, with the invitation to students to learn from source-based material and to produce argument essays that draw on that research. The work this unit covers sets the stage for the literary essay writing unit that is detailed in the full-length book for Grade 6 *(The Literary Essay: From Character to Compare/Contrast)*, Grade 7 *(The Art of Argument: Research-Based Essays)*, and Grade 8 *(The Literary Essay: Analyzing Craft and Theme)*. It could as easily follow these, especially with a greater focus on the final bends.

4. Memoir: Writing to Reflect on Experience and Suggest Thematic Connections

IF you want to teach a unit that will tap into students' motivation because it is especially personal, and that can also show students that structure follows content and that authors decide upon their structure as they figure out what they want to say, THEN a unit on memoir is a good choice. Such a unit can extend the personal narrative work that your students experienced in sixth grade, bringing the power of that unit to seventh grade, while also adding a new spin. Choose memoir if your students need to engage with their lives and each other in the curriculum, in order to build a cohesive community of writers, and if you'd like their writing to be more reflective, purposeful, and disciplined.

5. Historical Fiction: Weaving Together Fact and Fiction

IF your students have already experienced a realistic fiction writing unit and display a solid understanding of personal narrative writing, THEN this unit would be a good choice. This unit will especially appeal to your budding historians. Many teachers accompany this unit with social studies research, though you could teach it in isolation if your students have in-depth knowledge of a particular time period. Either way, the work is challenging in that it calls on students to weave historically accurate details through a well-crafted, fictional narrative; the unit also invites students to incorporate informational text through an accompanying prelude or endnote. Especially (but not only) if you choose to teach this alongside historical fiction reading, this unit will particularly build reading–writing connections.

6. Poetry: Immersion and Innovation

IF the language with which your students write tends to be social rather than literary, and you'd like to build their sense of playfulness, their love of words, their ability to make reading–writing connections, and their engagement with writing, THEN poetry gets teen writers writing up a storm. If you have students who struggle with stamina or writing long, poetry allows them to be successful as writers and therefore to build positive relationships with writing. When studying poetry, writers can mine mentor texts closely and repeatedly, so this unit provides you with a powerful opportunity to teach students to apprentice themselves deeply to the craft and form of writers they admire.

7. Documentaries: Bringing History to Life

IF your students know enough about topics to teach others and you'd like to see their informational writing have more voice, authenticity, and craft, THEN the invitation to produce historical documentaries gives them an opportunity to practice the essential skills of information writing such as organizing information, writing with both ideas and information, and highlighting a perspective. This unit also allows students to compose multimedia digital texts in a short, nine-session unit. To do this work, students need access to research sources, time to research, and opportunities to teach one another digital media.

8. Literary Essays: A Mini-Unit on Analyzing Complex Texts for Meaning, Craft, and Tone

IF you want a quick, minor unit to hone students' skills with text-based writing and to support their engaged reading, THEN writing literary essays will give students an opportunity to explore how theme and craft are related in the stories they read. Literary essays will also strengthen students' skills with analyzing text evidence and elaborating their thinking about complex texts. Choose literary essays to sustain a trajectory of writing about reading, analyzing texts, and illuminating complexity.

9. Fantasy: Writing Within Literary Traditions

IF your students are game to build upon their experience writing fiction with a unit that extends that work, THEN you'll want to teach them to write fantasy. This will be an especially good fit if you teach students who are fairly strong readers and who love fantasy and dystopian novels. A unit on writing fantasy will give these avid readers the chance to create their own worlds; work with archetypes, quest structures, and universal themes; and generally to revel in complexity. A unit on fantasy will particularly build reading-writing connections.

Differentiating Instruction for Individuals and Small Groups: If . . . Then . . . Conferring Scenarios

INTRODUCTION/RATIONALE

NARRATIVE WRITING

Structure and Cohesion

If the writer is new to the writing workshop or this particular genre of writing . . .
If the student seems to paragraph randomly or not much at all . . .
If the story lacks tension . . .
If the beginning of the piece is lacking story elements or does not hint at larger issues or tension . . .
If the ending of the piece seems incomplete or incongruous with the rest of the piece . . .
If the writer is ready to learn about the use of flashbacks and flash-forwards . . .

Elaboration

If the writer has elaborated, but in seemingly haphazard ways . . .
If the writer has created a story that is sparse, with little elaboration . . .
If the writer has written the external story but not the internal story . . .
If the writer relies on dialogue and internal thinking to show what a character is thinking and feeling and is ready for new techniques to achieve the same effect . . .
If the writer is not making use of literary devices . . .

Language Conventions

If the student is struggling with spelling, halting his or her progress . . .
If the writer constructs short, simple sentences and is ready to learn to punctuate longer, more complex sentences using median punctuation . . .

INFORMATION WRITING

Structure and Cohesion

If the writer has not established a clear organizational structure . . .
If there is no logical order to the sequence of information . . .
If the writer is ready to experiment with alternative organizing structures . . .
If the writer has chosen a topic that is too broad . . .
If the writer does not use transition words and phrases to help readers understand how the text is organized or how information fits together . . .
If the introduction to the piece is lacking or weak . . .
If the conclusion is lacking or weak . . .

Elaboration

If each section is short and needs elaboration . . .
If the writer elaborates by adding fact after fact . . .
If the writer does not elaborate on information from outside sources . . .
If the writer does not credit outside sources in his or her writing . . .
If the writer does not incorporate domain-specific vocabulary . . .

Language Conventions

If the writer incorporates quotes, facts, and statistics, but does so awkwardly . . .
If the writer struggles with spelling, particularly domain-specific vocabulary words . . .

ARGUMENT WRITING

Structure and Cohesion

If the introduction does not forecast the structure of the essay . . .
If the writer's introduction and/or conclusion feel formulaic . . .
If the writer's supports overlap . . .
If the writer's supports are not parallel or equal in weight . . .
If the writer has developed a thesis that is complex and nuanced, but lacks the skills to organize an essay that supports it . . .
If the writer needs help incorporating counterargument into her essay . . .
If the writer has a thesis and supports, but there is no evidence that he has considered a logical order for his supporting paragraphs . . .

Elaboration

If the writer is struggling to elaborate . . .
If the writer has chosen evidence for each body paragraph, but it does not all support his claim . . .
If the writer has included a variety of details and evidence, but it has swamped her piece . . .
If, when writing about reading, the writer is ready to analyze the craft moves an author makes and use those to support his argument . . .

Language Conventions

If the writer uses a casual, informal tone when writing . . .
If the writer struggles to punctuate correctly when quoting, especially when using only part of a quote from a text . . .

The Thematic Essay

BEND I

SAMPLE BEND

Session 1

Looking for Themes All around Us . . .

IN THIS SESSION, you'll remind students that writers are on the lookout for themes in all of the texts they read, and are able to explain, with details from the text, why they believe that theme to be present.

GETTING READY

- ✔ Before starting the session, partners will need to have agreed upon a book (or conceivably a short story) they both know well that will be the focus of their literary essay writing throughout the unit. Students will need these texts throughout the unit.
- ✔ Partners need to be sitting alongside each other during the minilesson and work time, throughout the unit.
- ✔ Copies of the class-shared anchor text, "All Summer in a Day" by Ray Bradbury, one per student. Students should be familiar with this text prior to today's session (see Teaching and Active Engagement).
- ✔ Ideally, be able to play the video clip to Taylor Swift's "Safe and Sound" http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RzhAS_GnJIc (YouTube search term "Safe and Sound Taylor Swift"), or another song where theme can be inferred and discussed. If this is hard to do, plan an alternative (see Connection).
- ✔ "How to Write a Thematic Essay" anchor chart, with the first bullet and subpoints already written (see Teaching)
- ✔ Your own writer's notebook. Be prepared to write an entry on the theme of the class anchor text "All Summer in a Day" or have that entry already written (see Teaching).
- ✔ "Prompts to Push Writers to Speculate about Themes in a Text" chart (see Mid-Workshop Teaching)
- ✔ Chart paper and markers (see Mid-Workshop Teaching)

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS: W.8.1, W.8.3.b, W.8.4, W.8.6, W.8.9.a, W.8.10, RL.8.1, RL.8.2, RL.8.3, RL.8.4, SL.8.1, SL.8.2, L.8.1, L.8.2, L.8.3

AT THE START OF THIS UNIT, you stand at a crossroads with your eighth-graders. (Picture a desert scene, sky for miles, and you standing at the center of four corners stretching out endlessly on the horizon.) Behind them lies all that they have learned about essay writing, about literary essays specifically, and about reading in powerful ways. Ahead of them lies high school and college, a virtual sea of essays about texts. And here you stand, about to begin joining what your students have been taught in the past with what will be expected of them in the future. It can make you a bit breathless, if you think on it for too long.

By the end of the first bend, your class will have written their first literary essay of this unit. This first essay will focus on analyzing the theme of a text—either a short story or a novel. You will encourage them to use all that they have learned in their past schooling to write the most effective and powerful essays they are able to write, and along the way you will teach them some new ways to make their writing that much better.

But this bend and this unit also aim to help your students—who are standing there with you at that crossroads—take in the view around them. This can be tough. Like a teenager who has his eyes glued to his smart phone while visiting the Grand Canyon, eighth-graders sometimes forget to reflect on what they have learned, and they sometimes miss the big picture. Sometimes we do too, for that matter. So this bend strives to help you and your classes to both move forward in their literary essay-writing journey while helping them to also look back for lessons from the past.

These first few sessions focus on helping your eighth-graders identify and analyze the themes of a text. While much of this work might live in the reading component of your curriculum, here you will teach students that *writing* about the themes in texts can help them to clarify, support, and complicate their thinking. To begin, you will teach your students that they are surrounded by themed texts—certainly within the printed texts they read, but also in the songs they listen to, the shows they watch, even the games they play. You will remind your students that identifying the theme in all those texts involves stepping back and asking, "What is this text really saying about some of the topics it addresses?" and

you will remind them that they can use writing to grow those initial ideas into something more sophisticated.

As we mentioned in the Welcome to the Unit, before this unit begins, your students will need to have already read the texts that they will be analyzing. The unit will work equally well whether your students are writing about short stories or novels, but we recommend the latter. Each choice has its own rewards and challenges. It is easier to absorb the entirety of a short text and to find the passages to mine, but there is much more to write about in a novel, making the experience of writing about novels more forgiving and generative. For example, it is easier to find support for a theme when writing about a novel than a short story, and easier to find patterns in the craft moves an author has used. Whichever you choose, be sure your students have already finished reading the texts they are writing about before the start of this unit since this is a writing unit. Students will do some rereading during the sessions, but there is not time within these sessions for them to actually read a novel.

"You will teach students that writing about the themes in texts can help them clarify, support, and complicate their thinking."

Additionally, you will want your students to have at least one person in the class who is writing about the same text, and the two people who share a text should be partners, sitting alongside each other throughout the unit during both the mini-lesson and work time. You may achieve this by first partnering students and then asking the twosomes to decide on a book they have both read and cared about. You may, instead, ask students to each suggest a short list of texts they'd like to write about and then use those suggestions to form same-book partnerships. You may have more than one set of partners writing about a particular text, in which case the foursomes can be called clubs and can meet together some of the time.

In the unit, the class will also need to have read (or heard you read aloud) the short story that threads its way throughout. That story is Ray Bradbury's "All Summer in a Day," chosen because of its brevity as well as its depth. This is a dystopian text. Dystopia is both engaging to most adolescents as well as rife with theme. We've included a short list of favorites from this genre in case you want to set students up, well before the unit, to read one of these texts with their partner in preparation for the unit. However, your students do not need to read from this genre since the genre choice in no way shapes this unit. If you decide to highlight dystopian texts, these are a few texts that eighth-graders have especially loved: "Harrison Bergeron," by Kurt Vonnegut, "The Invasion from Outer Space," by Steven Millhauser, "The Veldt," by Ray Bradbury, or stories from the anthology *Brave New Worlds*, edited by John Joseph Adams or *After*, edited by Ellen Datlow and Terri Windling. If your students are choosing dystopian novels, they might read *The Knife of Never Letting Go*, by Patrick Ness, *Divergent*, by Veronica Roth, *The Maze Runner*, by James Dashner, or of course *The Hunger Games*, by Suzanne Collins.

In any case, your students need to enter this session sitting alongside a same-book partner, and those partners need to have completed the book and to have copies with them. The class also needs to have read, or heard you read, "All Summer in a Day." You could substitute a different text for that one, but we do not recommend that for your first experience teaching the unit, since our work with this short story threads through the entire unit.

MINILESSON

Looking for Themes All around Us . . .

CONNECTION

Play a video of a current popular song or artist. Point out that songs, like stories, have themes or lessons that the songwriter and singer are trying to get across. Channel students to discuss in partners what the song's theme might be.

"Writers, I have to admit something to you. Yesterday I was coming to work, and a song came on, and it was one of those things—I don't know if it was the song, or what was in my heart, or if I was tired, but I totally choked up. And—this is the part that is tough to admit here—the thing is, it was to a Taylor Swift song." The class erupted in laughs. I nodded solemnly. "That's right. I'm a Taylor Swift fan. Here is the song that struck me." I played a minute of a YouTube video of the Taylor Swift song, "Safe and Sound" (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RzhAS_GnJIc, YouTube search term "Safe and Sound Taylor Swift").

"I was thinking about it later, and I think what got to me was what the song was saying—its theme. Will you discuss the theme with your partner—what do you think the artists were trying to say with this song? What's its theme?"

The class began to jovially talk to their partners. I went over to Flynn and Jared, who were, as usual, in a debate. Flynn was sure that the song was a lullaby, and Jared was sure it was a good-bye. "The person she is singing to is definitely dying," Jared was saying, to which Flynn shook his head and said, "No way. She is comforting the person." I stepped in to help redirect them. "So guys, it is okay if you have different interpretations of the song, but you should try to figure out not only *what is happening* in the song but also what is the artist's *theme or message to us*. You can have different ideas for a theme, but try that work now."

Flynn looked up and said, "Maybe it's about how we can make it through anything if we have people we care about." I nodded, "That's more like it. What about you, Jared, what do you think?"

Jared sighed dramatically. "I guess, I don't know, like, 'Sometimes it's better to lie to people than to tell them the horrible truth'?"

Flynn erupted in disbelief, and the debate continued. It was my turn to sigh now as I convened the class's attention.

◆ COACHING

If you detect that we're going all out to motivate and interest the kids, you're right. If you don't have kids' engagement in a unit, you have nothing. Therapists write whole books on the first five minutes of therapy sessions because those minutes are all-important. The first five minutes of a unit are equally important. On the other hand, this teaching won't work if there is no chance that your kids will believe you like Taylor Swift. Voice—the imprint of the writer's (or the teacher's) personality coming through—is an all-important quality in teaching as well as in writing. So prepare to alter this lead to the unit so that you can teach it with your own, unique voice.

Quickly recap a few of the themes you overheard.

"Wow—you just came up with some interesting ideas. I heard Winnie saying that nothing matters if you aren't safe. Veness thought maybe the song was telling people to take care of each other. What I love about the work you are doing here is that each of you has your own take on what the song is really saying, even though you're all talking about the same kinds of things. And I bet you could go into the song and totally back up why you think one interpretation is better than another, am I right?" The class nodded and shrugged.

Name the teaching point.

"So today what I want to remind you is that all narrative texts have themes within them, and that when literary critics start to look for those themes, they ask questions like, 'What is this text really about?' or 'What is this text trying to teach me about life?' Then, they sometimes write long to grow their ideas."

TEACHING

Explicitly name and demonstrate the step-by-step strategy you use to determine the theme of a story, doing this with the anchor short story (a familiar one) that will thread through your unit.

"So you read "All Summer in a Day," by Ray Bradbury last week, and I'm thinking that together we can do the same work on that story as we just did on the Taylor Swift song. So now step back and ask yourselves, 'What is Bradbury's story really about? What is it trying to teach me about life?' Eventually you'll be writing essays about your own texts.

"To get at the theme of a story, it can help to first think through what some of the problems or issues are within the text, and then to look for how this problem or issue appears across the whole text." I drew students' attention to a chart that I had created prior to today's session.

How to Write a Thematic Essay

- Collect ideas about the themes in a text.
  1. Name a central problem or issue that characters in the story face.
  2. Reflect on parts of the story that pertain to this problem.
  3. Think to yourself, "What is this story teaching me about this problem, this issue?"
  4. Write long about your thinking to grow your ideas, perhaps by asking how different characters relate to that issue.

This interaction, while probably the longest connection in the unit, should not last more than three or four minutes at the maximum. Always, always, keep in mind that minilessons are ten minutes in length, and the most important words are those at the end of the minilesson: "Off you go." People learn to write through writing.

If your students have been taught through the Units of Study curriculum across their middle school years, they have been taught this before. Notice how today's teaching point does not say, "Today I want to teach you" but instead says, "Today I want to remind *you . . ." Words should mean something—if you are teaching your class something new, say so. But remember that reminding them to draw on what they learned earlier is also critical.*

This unit will go most easily if you have reading workshop going along at pace with your writing workshop—that way you will have read the class story with your students already and they will have had time to read their texts in reading class and during homework for that class, discussing it with their partners in the context of a reading unit of study. If this is not your situation, as mentioned in the Welcome to the Unit, you will want to be sure to plan at least a week of class time to front-load this unit and allow your students time to read their texts.

SAMPLE BEND

"So first we need to name a big problem or issue that the main character (or many of the characters) face in the text—that's not usually going to be subtle! When we read this story together, we all agreed that jealousy is a problem (although there are others).

"We then need to recall how the story relates to jealousy, and what it teaches about that problem. So let's remember the story, thinking about that as we do. . . . You remember that there are kids who live on Venus who have never seen the sun. One girl, Margot, lived on Earth for a number of years and she *does* remember the sun. The sun is supposedly coming out today, for the first time in seven years. The rest of the kids are super jealous of Margot for having seen it already, so they lock her in a closet during the sun's appearance, which is really mean. Then because the sun has shone on them, they realize she was right and so they let her out.

"So now we need to ask, 'What is this story teaching me about this problem, about jealousy?' Hmm. Well the kids are jealous, and they act out, it's like they couldn't help themselves because of the jealousy. So maybe . . . jealousy can make you mean? That makes sense.

"Do you see how we followed a couple of steps to think about theme?" I gestured to the chart.

Remind students that they can use writing to explore ideas further.

Pointing to the final step listed in the chart, I said, "So once we have an idea about what a theme might be in the text—'jealousy can make you mean'—it helps to do some writing, since that is one of the best ways to help ideas grow. Writing gives a person focused time to explore ideas." I opened up my notebook and said, "You know a lot about writing long. Notice again how I use writing to grow ideas, to push thinking. I'm going to name the theme and then I have to think, 'How do I say more about this?' There are a bunch of ways to think through a theme—-maybe I'll think about how the theme relates to the different characters, so that'll be how jealousy makes different characters mean, or just, the effects of jealousy on different characters."

> One theme emerging in the text is that jealousy can make you mean. Because the kids are jealous of Margot, they keep her away from the sun, they are mean to her. So jealousy hurts Margot, the victim. But I think it also hurts the children who are acting jealous, too. They feel bad at the end of the story. They are not proud of themselves. This is significant because it shows that jealousy is harmful to everyone.

Debrief, highlighting the concrete steps you took to write about a story's theme.

"I hope you notice that what we did was to name and reflect on a problem in the story—jealousy—and we thought a bit about what the story might be teaching us about that problem. Then I started writing long about this idea."

You might be tempted to do more question and answer with your students rather than sharing so much of your own thinking. We hope you'll resist this temptation! While it sometimes seems that students will be more engaged if they are being called upon to answer questions, this often ends up turning your teaching into a guessing game that eats up time. We suggest you trust us and follow our lack of question: first you should provide an answer, then decide later whether you grasp the advantages of this. For us, this is crucial because ultimately we are saving time for kids to engage in real discussions later as they write and reread.

When writing within a minilesson, you need to decide whether you actually want to write with a marker on chart paper or to find another means to do so. Writing on chart paper is usually really slow and probably if your text is more than two lines long, it is not worth the time it takes. If you have a Smart Board or document camera and can write at top speed on notebook paper while meanwhile that text is being enlarged, then do that. Otherwise you might scrawl on your notebook and voice the words as you zip through them.

ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

Channel students to try the work of interpretation on another possible theme.

"So now you are going to give this work a go, on the same story. You might be thinking, 'But we already found the theme for that story!' But the thing about themes is that there is never just one theme, one right answer to what a story is really about. The best stories are like life—complicated and rich with meaning.

"Today, when you go off to work on your own stories and novels, you will not just find one theme in your texts, but many possible themes. So let's try that on 'All Summer in a Day' now. Work with your partner." I gestured to the first step on the chart. "What other central problems or issues do you see in this text? As you review parts of the story related to the issue or problem that comes to mind, think, 'What is the story teaching us about this problem?'"

Shirley and Myah began talking instantly. I moved over to them. Myah was pointing to the story, saying, "I think a big problem in this story is the adults—like, where are they?"

Shirley nodded, "Yeah why aren't they stopping the kids from, like, torturing each other?"

I intervened, "Nice work finding another problem—what's your next step?"

Shirley shrugged. I pointed to the next two items on the chart. She smiled. "Ohhhh! What parts of the story go with this and what is the story teaching?"

I moved on, voicing over to the whole class, "Don't forget to let the chart guide you."

Then I brought the class together. "Wow. I have to say I can really see how much you learned in sixth and seventh grade about thinking through themes in texts. Shirley and Myah said that this story is teaching us that left alone, kids will be cruel to each other. That kids need adults. And Glen and Lucas talked about how the story is teaching that being different is difficult. Really nice work. Of course, if you were working on this story on your own, you would go off and write long about your ideas, trying to grow and to complicate them."

Notice that when you are referring back to steps in a strategy, it is helpful to repeat the exact words you used earlier for those steps so that students see that you are not teaching them something new, you are simply threading that prior instruction into their work. Eventually, of course, once students have internalized these steps so they are second nature to them, you can talk about them using lots of different language to describe what you hope students are doing, but you just taught kids to follow these steps—for now, it is important to keep your language consistent.

Moving on is important. Think of yourself as listening, nudging, and then leaving. And if you find yourself needing to say the same nudge to several sets of partners, then you know to say this as a quick voiceover to the entire class.

LINK

Encourage your students to set goals for their work that day.

"So today your work will be to think and write about the themes coming up in your *own* stories. You've all selected a text that you have read completely by now. Some of you may need to do some more rereading and annotating to get your thoughts clear. I've shown you one process for thinking about theme—start with the problems of a text, recall the parts of the story that relate to this problem, think about what the text is teaching about this problem, and then write long to grow your ideas. But some of you may have other ways to get yourselves thinking and writing about the themes in your text. Once you have a theme in mind, get started and plan to write at least a page and a half or two pages today. This will probably be one entry about the text—it is about reading but do it in your writer's notebook—but it could be two shorter entries.

"Right now, get started. If some of you have trouble getting started, gather around me and I'll give you a leg up."

Ambitious Teaching that Gets Students off to a Productive Start

AT THE END OF YOUR MINILESSON, you set things up so that you will first support those students who are not confident that they can get started without support. A student who is new to your school, or one who has not had the full course of work outlined in this middle school series may not have had enough experience reflecting on the themes of a text to feel confident working independently at the start of today's work time. You could suggest those students look for a minute at another text they know well, guiding them to work in temporary partnerships (with others in this hastily convened group) through a simple version of this work, done with that text. In this way, the small-group work becomes a second, very quick minilesson, only instead of you doing the work in front of the class, you give the students directions to proceed, step by step, to do the work themselves.

After they have done the work very quickly with a text they know well, you could then ask them to look at their own texts, and instead of suggesting they stare at the pages until the idea for a theme brings to mind, you could point out that the reason themes are called "universal themes" is that many themes apply to many stories. Suggest they take whatever theme they found in the text just studied and see if, perhaps, a variation of that same theme might be embedded in the novel they are reading. Then again, they could take one of a handful of common themes and try any one of those on for size.

You will also find students who have trouble accessing all they know from prior years of instruction. Take heart—your students' shrugging of shoulders is not uncommon, and just a few tiny visual clues can usually bring all they know flooding back. People benefit from warm-ups, visual cues and quick reminders that help them remember the details of something long past. And for eighth-graders, a year is a long time indeed! So if you have some kind of artifact for them to study—a photo of a chart from last year's teaching, or your students' old reading notebooks—you can ask students to look this over so that it jogs their memory. Channel them to have a quick discussion about how the work they did last year can help them with the work of today, of this unit.

Perhaps foremost among other reminders will be charts about essay structures. You are asking students to write entries, not essays, but they will be proposing a theme and writing about the evidence in a text that supports that theme—and the easiest way to do this writing is within an essay structure. So watch for whether they draw upon what they know about essays to write, and if they don't, ask about that.

As you talk with students about the novel they are studying and their ideas about that novel, watch closely for evidence of whether the student is actually able to read that book. Many eighth-graders, when asked whether they feel like they can do this high level of work in a book that is significantly too hard for them to read, will admit honestly that they cannot. To assess this, you might try to deliberately set students up to read passages to you that support one theme or another, just so that you have windows into whether this is a text that the students can read easily. If the student doesn't read the text with fluency, including the intonation that suggests the student is comprehending the text, don't waste a moment before getting the student to switch to an easier book. Offer students the chance to return to a familiar text that is a far better fit, and create an action plan with your students so that they "catch up" on the work of the unit so far. Dick Allington, Penny Kittle, Peter Johnston, among others, join TCRWP staff in making the rather obvious case that for students to be successful as readers and as writers about reading, they need to be able to read the books they are holding. If you see that many of your students are unable to think at all about the themes in a text, or if their reading closely gives them no new insights into those themes, then you might check in on the match between their reading abilities and the level of book they are holding.

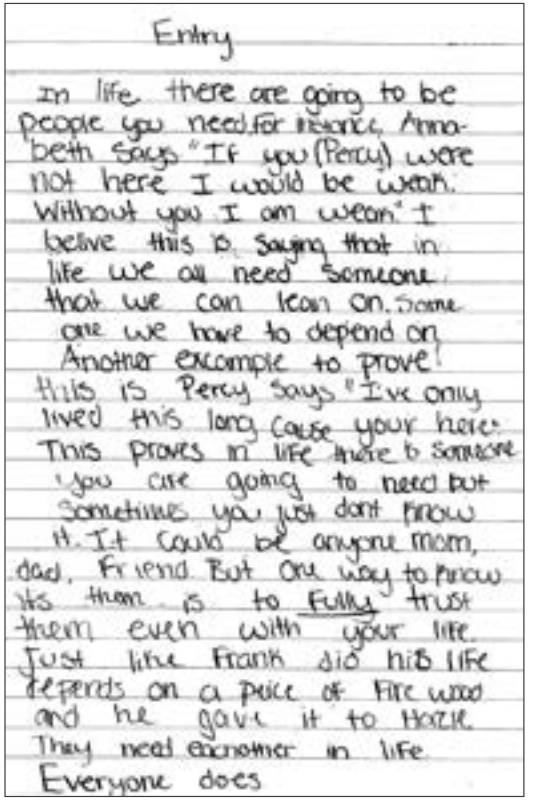
Finally, be sure that you continue to convey that you expect students to produce *at least* a page and a half today, and that most are writing two or more pages. If your students have not had prior writing instruction or for some other reason these expectations seem ambitious, keep that to yourself. Act like these suggestions for volume are *not* over the top—and believe this as well. In fifth grade, most students were

(*continues*)

MID-WORKSHOP TEACHING **Reminders of Thought Prompts**

"Class, let me get your attention for a second. So I was working with Terrell, and he remembered some of the techniques he used last year when trying to write long about an idea, that he thought would help you all. Terrell tried to use the thought prompts most of you have learned in the past few years to help grow his thinking. Terrell? Will you share the thought prompts you remembered?"

Terrell spoke shyly, "Um, yeah. I used like 'Maybe . . .' and 'The reason for this is . . .' I think there are others too but I didn't use them."



Entry

In life there are going to be people you need for instance, Annabeth says "If you (Percy) were not here I would be weak. Without you I am weak" I belive this is saying that in life we all need someone that we can lean on. Some one we have to depend on. Another excample to prove this is Percy says "I've only lived this long cause your here. This proves in life there is someone you are going to need but sometimes you just dont know it. It could be anyone mom, dad, Friend But one way to know his them is to Fully trust them even with your life. Just like Frank did his life depends on a peice of Fire wood and he gave it to Hazle. They need eachother in life. Everyone does

FIG. 1–1 Lara uses the thought prompts "For instance" and "Another example."

"I bet we could come up with a good list here today of some thought prompts that might help push your thinking. Take a second and talk to the person next to you—what prompts do you remember using in the past?"

Within seconds, the class had called out some ideas, and as they got back to work I jotted their ideas into some sequential order, producing a new chart.

writing a page and a half a day! You'd be surprised how much power your expectations have over the quantity and quality of work that your students do—so ramp them up. Because you absolutely will need to pay attention to volume, call out voiceovers often, such as "Your hand should be flying over the paper," and "You've been writing twenty minutes by now, you should be well into your second page . . ." Say this even if you have to role-play your way into having this sort of confidence. You'll be amazed how much of a difference your ambitious teaching makes.

SHARE

Writing about Themes of Personal Significance

Explain to writers that although they are engaged in academic writing, it is still imperative that they write from a personal place and with voice.

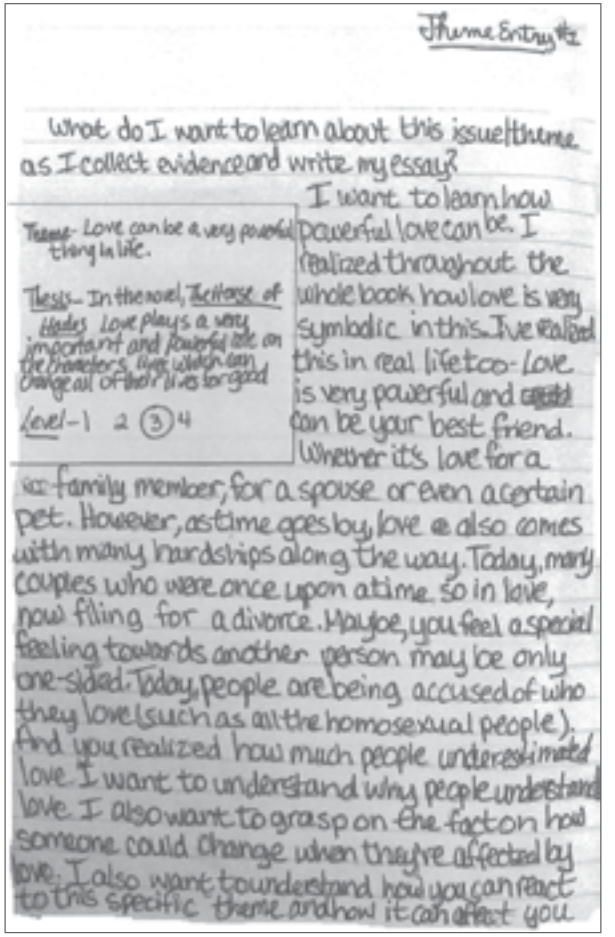
"Writers, as you are probably seeing, the work of this unit is going to be pretty academic. It's going to be the kind of writing you will do in high school and college, and the kind of writing that you will do when you are communicating with other scholars in the field. When you write academic texts, it can sometimes feel as if you leave your interests, your self, at the door. In fact, many teachers will teach you to never use the word *I* in your essays. How many of you have heard that before?" Hands shot up around the classroom.

I nodded. "Well, that advice is debatable—we'll talk more about it—but yes, literary essays tend to be more about your head than your heart. But literary critics care—and care deeply—about the ideas and themes in their essays. Usually that caring comes not only from the text but also from a personal place. Donald Murray, a Pulitzer prize–winning writer, often said to his students, 'Write about ideas that strike an echoing chord in your own being.'"

Demonstrate that literary critics explore themes that matter to them, then urge students to do the same.

"Before you get too committed to one of the themes you addressed so far in your entries, it's a good idea to step back and reflect on which of those themes resonates for you, and to keep searching until you find a theme that does. Think of a theme you have written about today and ask yourself whether that theme matters to you. Because here is the thing—if you aren't connected to your work, your readers won't be either. For example, think about the class text and the class theme for a moment. If you were considering writing a literary essay on the theme that jealousy can make people selfish or blind to others, you'd want to first think whether that has been true in your own life.

"For example, for me, I was in a play once in school and I did really well—it was the first time I really succeeded at anything. I was so happy. But then my best friend seemed to give these little digs all night: telling me how the director was saying how brilliant my co-stars were, for example. Her tone of voice was really weird and condescending.


Theme Entry #2

What do I want to learn about this issue/theme as I collect evidence and write my essay?

I want to learn how powerful love can be. I realized throughout the whole book how love is very symbolic in this. I've realized this in real life too. Love is very powerful and can be your best friend. Whether it's love for a family member, for a spouse or even a certain pet. However, as time goes by, love also comes with many hardships along the way. Today, many couples who were once upon a time so in love, now filing for a divorce. Maybe, you feel a special feeling towards another person may be only one-sided. Today, people are being accused of who they love (such as all the homosexual people). And you realized how much people underestimate love. I want to understand why people understand love. I also want to grasp on the fact on how someone could change when they're affected by love. I also want to understand how you can react to this specific theme and how it can affect you

Theme- Love can be a very powerful thing in life.

Thesis- In the novel, The House of Hades Love plays a very important and powerful role on the characters, that which can change all of their lives for good

Level- 1 2 (3) 4

FIG. 1–2 Joy explores the theme of "love" in *The House of Hades*.

"When I think about my experience with this issue, I can push myself by asking, 'What *do* I want to learn about this theme?' And I think one thing I want to think about is why other people are unhappy when things are going well for a person. What allows that kind of jealousy to take hold?

"Now I know today you were exploring different themes than this one. But will you talk with your partner about whatever themes you were exploring today, thinking together about whether your life experiences draw you to that theme. What do you want to learn from exploring the story's message? Turn and talk."

I moved among the tables where students sat, coaching them to nudge each other to get started by saying things like, "Have you ever seen this idea work in your life?" and "Why might this theme matter to you?"

Soon I brought the class together and asked Flynn to share his thinking. He said, "Well I was writing about kindness and how hard it is to be kind sometimes. And, well, like I guess that can be hard for me too. Like I was kind of a jerk to someone yesterday and now I am thinking that I could have been kinder."

I interrupted. "Okay, so what do you want to find out about kindness from this study you are about to begin?

"I guess I want to know what to do to, like, overcome the parts of you that are not kind. I want to know how not to be mean, and I guess why that is so tough."

I nodded, and said to all the students, "So tonight for homework, keep working on what you did today."

SESSION 1 HOMEWORK

EXPLORING THEMES

"Tonight, write one and a half or two pages in your notebook. You could write another theme entry or two, or you could dig deeper into a theme entry you already wrote, exploring how that theme plays out in more parts of the text. The choice is yours, but make sure your writing is at least a page and a half, and that you remember to follow similar steps as we did today. Please, also, email your entry to your partner so that the two of you read each other's work before class tomorrow."

Session 2

Reading Closely to Develop Themes

IN THIS SESSION, you'll teach students that academic writers look closely at a text to further develop their understanding of the text's themes, and then use writing to discover what the whole text is saying about those ideas.

GETTING READY

- ✔ "How to Write a Thematic Essay" anchor chart (see Teaching)
- ✔ Chart paper and markers (see Teaching)
- ✔ Your own copy as well as students' copies of the anchor text "All Summer in a Day" (see Teaching and Active Engagement)
- ✔ Your own writer's notebook, as well as a notebook entry with possible claims for "All Summer in a Day" enlarged for students to see (see Teaching and Share)
- ✔ "Prompts to Push Writers to Speculate about Themes in a Text" chart, from Session 1 (see Active Engagement)
- ✔ Texts students are analyzing for their own writing (see Link)
- ✔ Students' writer's notebooks (see Link and Share)

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS: W.8.1.c, W.8.2.d, W.8.4, W.8.6, W.8.9.a, RL.8.1, RL.8.2, RL.8.3, RL.8.4, SL.8.1, L.8.1, L8.2, L.8.3

YOUR STUDENTS will come to this session having written several entries in which they explore possible themes that they have found threading through the novels (or short stories) they are studying in this unit. You'll support them in collecting more entries today and this evening, and this time your teaching will ask them to make sure that the themes they imagine are actually embedded in the text.

There is for all of us a moment in our lives when we want something very badly and are on the hunt. Perhaps it is a new job, or a house, or even a relationship. When this happens, we scour the world for the thing we desire, and often, we pounce on the first possibility that comes our way, scared that it will be the only opportunity we have to see our dreams come true. We take the first job offer, buy the first house, get into the first relationship available to us. The problem with this mentality, of course, is that the first opportunity may not always be the best one. While we cannot see into the future, it is often a good idea to wait a bit and see what our options are, holding out a little for that perfect situation that might bring us true happiness.

This human truth holds true in writing as well. By now, your students have written a handful of entries exploring themes in their texts, and will, through that writing, presumably have explored three or four themes. Some of those themes may sound quite lovely and profound—and indeed, they may be. But they also may not be the best possible theme for this story—it will be important to teach your students to hold out a bit, to do a bit more searching for that perfect fit.

In this session, you'll remind your students that literary critics use close reading to refine and develop their understanding of the themes they find in texts. Students profit from doing some freewriting about those themes. When people do this sort of writing, it can provide them with material and insights that are foundational for the essays they eventually produce.

This is the foundational work—the holding out and digging deeper for the perfect job, house, or relationship. This is you, giving your students chances to hold out and dig deep for their personal bests, to find a claim that will be at the heart of their essays.

MINILESSON

Reading Closely to Develop Themes

CONNECTION

Rally students to reread, rethink, and revise their understandings of the themes in their texts. Do this in part by explaining that one of your life themes has played out differently at different moments in your life.

"Writers, you are off to an intense start in this work of learning to write first-class literary essays. You are all fired up to keep writing and writing, I know, but I need to rein you in a little now, and remind you that when you have just gotten yourself started on a writing project, that's always a good time to pause just a bit, and to rethink your direction.

"For example, if you rethink the theme you've begun to follow, and revisit your text with that theme in mind, you'll no doubt see things you didn't see the first time. Among other things, you'll find that the one theme you were tracking actually changes as the text unrolls.

"Themes evolve, they change, not just across a text—they also change across a life. When I was planning this lesson for you, I started thinking about how I have themes in my life and how the themes in my life evolve over time. Like I have this theme of not feeling like I fit in. When I look at just one part of my life, I can see things about not fitting in that are different from when I look at another part of my life. By looking closely at certain parts of my life where fitting in was a big deal, I can see so much more than when I just think in general about that issue in my life.

"For example, I can see that when I was younger I just plain felt like I didn't fit—I was the new kid a lot, I was different than other kids, I was shy. Then, when I was a teenager, I wanted so badly to fit in and I tried really hard. So it was like I was fitting in, I had friends and stuff, but inside I felt apart and a little lonely, like I had this secret self. And then in college, I found that by learning to be myself, the right people would fit with me, that I didn't have to do anything but be me (and have a thick skin). When I look more closely at certain parts of my experience, I see that really what I have learned about fitting in is that while not fitting in is painful, it helps you to define who you are. That in some ways, the pain of not fitting in can be the best thing in the world.

"In a previous session you collected some entries in which you thought about the different themes in a text and wrote long about them. But in the stories you read, as in life, themes come alive in the smaller, key moments of the text. If you want to understand a theme, you need to look a little closer."

◆ COACHING

Again, this minilesson tries to recruit students' motivation for the work you are asking them to do. You can't teach them how to revise their thinking about themes without first at least trying to sell them on the idea of revising their thinking.

To build even more excitement and interest around the idea of your life themes, you could bring in photos of yourself at these different stages of your life. This is a great opportunity to quickly show students a side of yourself they may not always see.

Name the teaching point.

"Today I am going to teach you that literary essayists dig deep into the texts they are writing about, reading critical scenes closely to look for nuance and detail, and then they use writing to say what they think the text is really saying. This is what's entailed in writing about a theme—reading closely to see how your thinking about the theme might evolve."

TEACHING

Tell students that literary essayists reread the text with theme in hand, noting critical scenes in which the theme is especially in evidence, and revising or adding to their thinking about the theme as they go.

"So previously, you went through several steps to look for themes in your texts. You found a problem or issue that was explored in your texts, you reflected on parts of your texts that pertained to the issue, you asked yourselves what the story aimed to teach about the issue, and then you wrote long to grow your ideas. In 'All Summer in a Day,' I wrote about the idea that jealousy can hurt people.

"But the next step, what I want to teach you today, is that essayists go back to the text to look a little closer and see if there is more there, hiding in the details of certain scenes. To do that, it helps to look for multiple scenes in the story where that issue is present." I turned to the anchor chart and pointed out the next step.

How to Write a Thematic Essay

- Collect ideas about the themes in a text.
  1. Name a central problem or issue that characters in the story face.
  2. Reflect on parts of the story that pertain to this problem.
  3. Think to yourself, "What is this story teaching me about this problem, this issue?"
  4. Write long about your thinking to grow your ideas, perhaps by asking how different characters relate to that issue.
- **Go back to the text and reread closely to see how the theme works in certain critical scenes.**

When you retell prior instruction, try to use the same words as before to talk about what students did. You want this work to be in their bones, and return to it often, saying this almost as if it is a mantra, is a good idea.

"So if I am thinking about how jealousy hurts people in 'All Summer in a Day,' I might list a few scenes that I think are critical scenes for that idea. What do you all think? Which scenes or moments would you call critical scenes for the idea that jealousy hurts people?"

Myah shot her hand up. "Definitely the part where they are talking about Margot remembering the sun."

"Okay," I said, and jotted that scene on a new sheet of chart paper. "What else?" The class was silent, awkward. I smiled and said, "Take a look at the story, pick a scene you think fits." The class looked at their stories quickly. "What do you think?" I asked.

Jonathan piped in, "What about when she is looking out the window remembering the sun?" I wrote that one down too, nodding, and motioning for more from the class.

"And when they put her in the closet! Oh, and the end scene when they remember her!" Claire said with excitement.

This is an opportunity for students to practice the work of choosing scenes from a text that fit a certain issue or idea, work they'll have to do independently in short order. Don't be concerned if students suggest a scene you aren't sure will fit. If one student suggestion isn't, in your view, ideal, it won't stop the lesson from moving forward, though you may want to keep these students in mind when you confer later on in the session.

Show the class how by returning to the details of a text, writers' thinking about the theme grows.

"So I think my first idea, that jealousy hurts people, is a good idea, but not great. It's my rough draft idea. And one thing I know, that I emphasize to you, is that by returning to a text and looking at the details, your thinking grows and changes and becomes more interesting. So let's choose a scene . . . Hmm . . . Let's choose this scene where they are deciding to lock Margot up. It's when William, the antagonist in the story, suggests that they should do it . . . I'm going to reread this part—will you help me look for the details that connect to the idea that jealousy hurts people?"

> *The biggest crime of all was that she had come here only five years ago from Earth, and she remembered the sun and the way the sun was and the sky was when she was four in Ohio. And they, they had been on Venus all their lives, and they had been only two years old when last the sun came out and had long since forgotten the color and heat of it and the way it really was. But Margot remembered.*

"Do you notice that the text says that Margot's past on Earth is a *crime*. That word seems especially important. It's like the other children are so jealous, that they see Margot as doing something bad to them, like stealing, or hurting them. And all she is doing is remembering something they have forgotten. She can't help it, she can't help who she is.

"This makes me think that the original idea, that this text is teaching us that 'jealousy hurts people,' is not quite it. I am going to write out some of my thoughts, pushing myself to connect the idea I am having with the details I have pulled from the text." I wrote in my notebook, reading aloud as I went:

> At first I thought the theme was that jealousy hurts people, but I think it is more than that. The kids see Margot's memory of the sun as almost a crime against them, like she is doing this to them.

"So now I want to write more about this, but I'm not sure how to keep going." Referring back to the chart from the day before, I said, "I am going to try out using a prompt like 'Consequently . . .' or 'Maybe . . .' or even 'This is significant because . . .' to keep myself going and see if I have more to say.

> Consequently, their jealousy is so big and so painful that they can't see that Margot is just a little kid who lived on Earth longer. This is significant, because their jealousy makes it so they can't see anything but their own hurt. Maybe that is something the text is teaching us too–that jealousy makes you blind to other people? Or maybe it is that jealousy makes you selfish.

"I like how I went from 'jealousy can hurt people' to 'jealousy can make you selfish and blind to other people.' That feels like a more interesting idea to examine!"

Debrief the steps you took.

"I hope you saw that I took some steps that you could try as well. First, I chose a few scenes that were critical to the idea I was analyzing. Then, I reread one scene closely, thinking about how the theme worked in this one episode. And then, of course, I wrote long about my thinking in hopes that my thinking would go even further.

ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

Channel students to try the steps you took using another scene in the text.

"So why don't you practice on another part of 'All Summer in a Day' before you work on your own text?" I picked out another critical scene that seemed to fit this idea of jealousy hurting people. It's that last scene, the one where the kids realize what they have done to Margot by locking her in the closet. As I read, think about how the theme is working in this part. After I finish reading, turn and talk to your partner about what you are thinking." I read aloud and the students followed on their copies:

> *"Will it be seven more years?"*
>
> *"Yes. Seven."*
>
> *Then one of them gave a little cry.*
>
> *"Margot!"*
>
> *"What?"*
>
> *"She's still in the closet where we locked her."*
>
> *"Margot."*

Showing students not just how to use a strategy—in this case thought prompts—but when to use it, is vital work. By showing yourself "in trouble" as a writer, and then showing how you get yourself out of trouble using strategies that kids can use too, you help kids to see the relevance of your teaching.

How to Write a Thematic Essay

- Collect ideas about the themes in a text.
  1. Name a central problem or issue that characters in the story face.
  2. Reflect on parts of the story that pertain to this problem.
  3. Think to yourself, "What is this story teaching me about this problem, this issue?"
  4. Write long about your thinking to grow your ideas, perhaps by asking how different characters relate to that issue.
- Go back to the text and reread closely to see how the theme works in certain critical scenes.

They stood as if someone had driven them, like so many stakes, into the floor. They looked at each other and looked away. They glanced out at the world that was raining now and raining and raining steadily. They could not meet each other's glances.

I gestured for the students to talk. Antoine and Myah sat in silence. I moved over to them and coached them to get started. "Start with the emotions or traits that the problems might bring out in people. That's a good way to begin. You can ask yourselves, what does jealousy make people feel in this bit?" The two spoke simultaneously, Antoine saying, "They feel bad," while Myah blurted "Guilty." I nodded, urging them to keep going.

Remind the class to use thought prompts to help push their thinking.

After checking in with a few more partnerships, I brought the class together. "You have some ideas, but I think saying more might help you have better ideas. Let's see how using thought prompts can make your thinking more powerful. Antoine, can I work with you for a moment?"

Antoine shrugged. I beamed. "Great. Can you start off with your idea?"

He muttered, "Jealousy makes you feel bad—guilty."

"Yes!" I said. "Great. So now, let's look at this," and I gestured to the "Prompts to Push Writers to Speculate about Themes in a Text" chart. "What if I asked you to take the thought prompt, 'This is significant because . . .' and see where it takes you . . . ?"

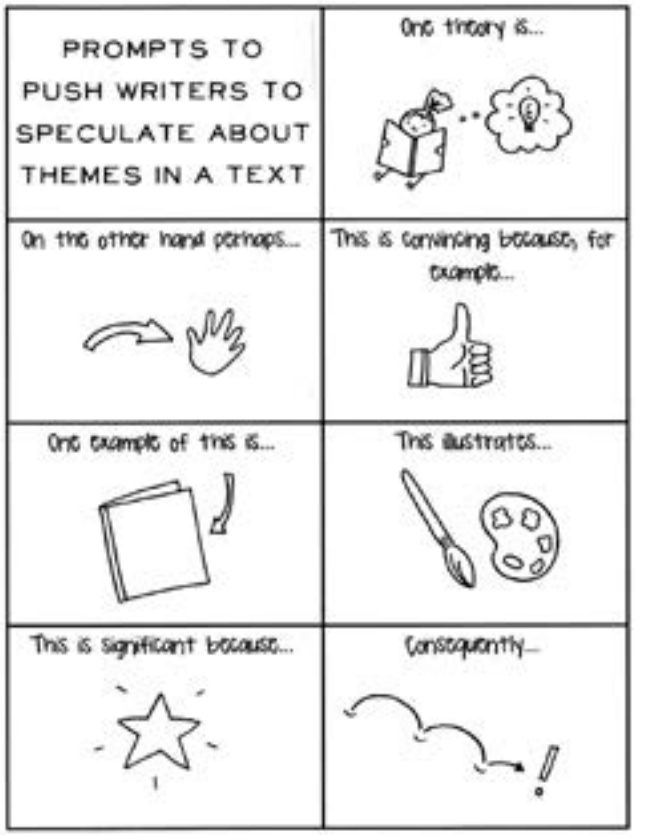
Antoine scrunched up his face in thought. "Um . . ." Seeming unsure of where he was going, he repeated, "This is significant because . . . uh . . ."

I coached a bit: "Think about why this matters in the story."

"I guess it's, um, significant because at first you think, like, that the jealousy is like, they're right but then you see that maybe, like, hurting other people doesn't really make them feel better."

I repeated the idea, saying it with great respect, and gave Antoine a high-five. Then I addressed the class, saying, "Antoine took a leap of faith and tried using the thought prompt to say more. That's work you all should do if you get to a place where you feel 'done.'"

Conducting a fishbowl of a coaching session with a student can be very powerful. Notice how we asked Antoine's permission and recruited his cooperation. He is not the student who always has his hand in the air, and his idea is not the best. We chose him deliberately because we know that when the class sees the technique we are teaching move him from having a weak idea to having a stronger idea, we know they will think, "Whoa! I could do that too."



LINK

Set students up for their work by encouraging them to begin choosing which scenes they should reread.

"Get started right now. Take a moment right here and right now to work with your partner to choose some scenes that you think are important to a theme you think you want to analyze—and you and your partner can choose different themes. Don't worry about choosing a whole bunch of scenes—just be sure that you choose two or three scenes that fit with the theme that each of you decide to study."

As students began working with their partners flipping through their books and writer's notebook pages, I coached a few of them toward scenes that seemed like critical ones for their themes, by saying things like, "You might think of a scene where the emotions are really strong around that issue or problem," and, "You could look for scenes where that issue or problem is caused—like where it all begins."

Then I said to the whole class, "Of course, once you are done closely reading one scene, move to another scene that is also related to that theme. Once you are done with one theme, move to another theme. You'll certainly write another two pages of entries today. "I added, "And a heads up—by the time you come into class tomorrow, you'll need to have settled on two possibilities for a claim, a thesis, around which you could write a major literary essay. The work you do today will help you to clarify a theme that you are sure is embedded in the text, and that matters to you. The work you have been doing lately has been powerful—sometimes profoundly thoughtful—and it will all culminate in a major essay fairly soon. Hard work today is really going to pay off." I paused dramatically, and then said cheerfully, "Go team go!"

Planning for Ways to Clarify What Themes Are—and Are Not

AS YOUR STUDENTS GET STARTED, you'll want to circulate quickly, doing all you can to steer them toward rereading and poring over scenes that are critical to the story. If they search for the scenes by starting on page 1 and leafing through the selection, they are apt to grab the first scene that carried the theme they have in mind, and that scene may not actually be critical to the whole text. So encourage them to realize they'll probably choose one scene from the first third of the text, one from the middle, one from the end, so they can be selective. It is usually wise to zoom in on scenes where there is conflict, or where there is illumination, as when a character learns a lesson. You can channel kids to almost think of a story arc for the issue or theme they have in mind, and then to try to locate key moments along that arc.

As students write about the themes they see in texts, it will help you if you are clear what you really are expecting when you ask them to identify themes. The literature is confusing about this. There are some who suggest that these are themes in literature: loss, fairness, beauty, truth. Others argue strenuously against a word being thought of as a theme. If there is an absolute right or wrong answer to this discussion, we certainly do not want to be the final arbitrators of that, but what we can tell you is that we refer to terms such as "truth" or "loneliness" as issues or motifs and not as themes. We think students' thinking is better when they are encouraged to be more specific and insightful when speaking of themes, so we think of themes as being more like insights. These are the sorts of things we expect students to produce when we ask them for themes:

> Loneliness can tend to show itself when you are with other people.
>
> People are not always what you at first perceive them to be.
>
> If it looks like people have changed, sometimes it is really our perception of them that has changed.
>
> Even characters who are villains have likeable qualities.
>
> Your flaws can lead to great and hopeful changes.

If a student produces, as his or her theme, a term like *friendship*, then it is helpful to ask that student to write about the particular ideas about friendship that the book they are studying suggests. That student may end up writing that oftentimes one's friends can hurt you more than your enemies, or that sometimes friendships become like anchors, holding a person down.

When looking for where themes reside, it is often the case that the ending of a book is a place where readers realize themes that have been present in the book all along. Perhaps, in the end, the villain turns out to not be all bad. Chances are good that the author will have planted evidence of that all along, and a close reread of scenes will show that this was always the case and the reader simply missed it. So yes, the ending of the book is a particularly helpful place for readers to see themes—but then those themes can be traced back through the book.

Once students have identified a theme and reread their text, looking for evidence of the theme, you may find they can profit from assisted guidance with this work. The work is absolutely within reach for your students, but you are asking them to do a multistep process, and some won't be able to do this entirely independently yet. Gather these students together and try simply naming the first step and then giving them some time to try that move before you move on to step two. Cheer them on as they work on a step; give them courage to take on more of the work. Above all, try to avoid doing the work for them—hold back that beautiful instinct to say, "What about loss? Do you think the story might be about loss?" Avoid that, because as soon as you have said those words, your student will nod vigorously, learning that if he or she delays long enough, you will eventually do the work for him or for her, and furthering the belief that really, he or she probably can't do it independently anyway. Instead, push students to have an idea, and then even if the ideas are not as good as yours would have been, move them on. Keep in mind that if a student suggests a theme that actually does not pay off across the entire book, this is exactly the work they should be doing. Every writer runs into those dead ends!

MID-WORKSHOP TEACHING **"The Bigger the Idea, the Smaller You Write"**

"Writers, I have one important tip. A famous writer named Richard Price once gave this writing advice. 'The bigger the idea, the smaller you write.' I'm telling you this because many of you are writing about themes that are big lofty ideas. We have themes in play such as, 'You learn more from your enemies than from your friends,' and 'Sometimes the cruelest thing people can do to each other is to tell the truth.' Those are big ideas. You'll remember last year you learned about the ladder of abstraction. If you are going to write about big ideas, remember that your writing needs to also be about concrete things.

"Eudora Welty, a great writer, once wrote a literary essay about E. B. White's book, *Charlotte's Web*. She wrote that the book is about friendship on earth, trust and treachery . . . but she also, in her essay, included details like these: Wilbur, responsive to the song of the crickets, has long eyelashes, and she described him as subject to feints of embarrassment. She wrote about Charlotte, the spider, saying she is 'about the size of a gumdrop' and that she has eight legs and can wave them in friendly greeting. She added, 'When her friends wake up in the morning she says "Salutations!"—in spite of sometimes having been up all night herself, working.'

"Do you see that Eudora Welty writes with teeny tiny precise detail, bringing her characters to life? More than this, to do so, she actually lifts key words and key details from the book. The long eyelashes, the call, 'Salutations!' . . . those were all E. B. White's intention, and all that Eudora Welty did was to value them enough to bring them into her essay. Do the same. Bring in the detail, especially because you are writing about big ideas.

"Please think about this as you get back to work."

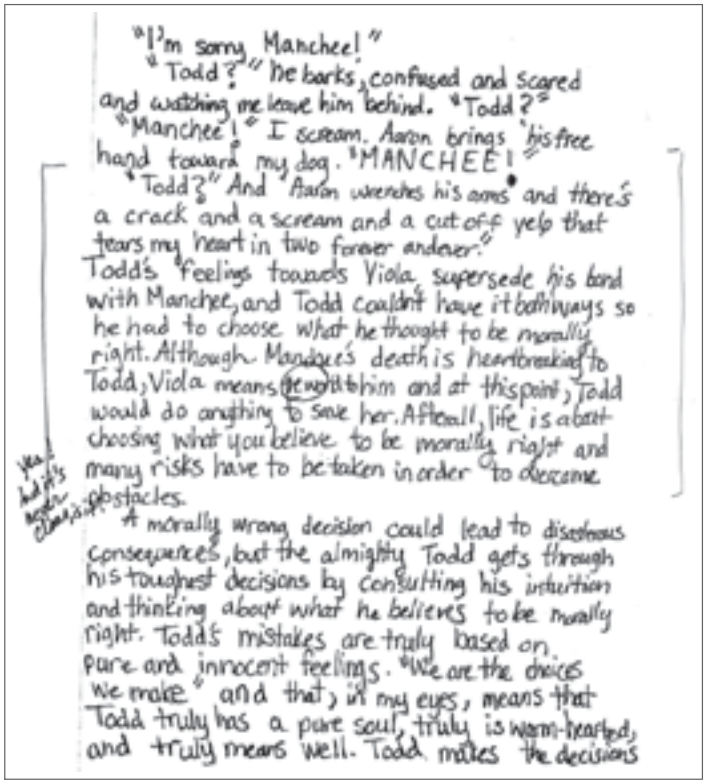

"I'm sorry, Manchee!"
"Todd?" he barks, confused and scared and watching me leave him behind. "Todd?"
"Manchee!" I scream. Aaron brings his free hand toward my dog. "MANCHEE!"
"Todd?" And Aaron wrenches his arms and there's a crack and a scream and a cut-off yelp that tears my heart in two forever and ever.
Todd's feelings towards Viola supersede his bond with Manchee, and Todd couldn't have it both ways so he had to choose what he thought to be morally right. Although Manchee's death is heartbreaking to Todd, Viola means the world to him and at this point, Todd would do anything to save her. After all, life is about choosing what you believe to be morally right and many risks have to be taken in order to overcome obstacles.
A morally wrong decision could lead to disastrous consequences, but the almighty Todd gets through his toughest decisions by consulting his intuition and thinking about what he believes to be morally right. Todd's mistakes are truly based on pure and innocent feelings. "We are the choices we make" and that, in my eyes, means that Todd truly has a pure soul, truly is warm-hearted, and truly means well. Todd makes the decisions

FIG. 2–1 Rachel's attention to detail supports her big theme.

Revising Your Ideas about Theme

Share with students that they can expect their ideas about the theme of a book to change as they explore the theme further.

"Writers, you have now written about six entries about the theme in your novel. I know they are all locked into your writer's notebooks so that you can't spread them in front of you, but pretend you can do so. Skim over the entries you've written as if they are spread before you.

"Here is my question. Which comes first, which comes next, which comes next in the timeline of your thinking? And this may have nothing to do with when you wrote them. But which represents the first thought you had about this book, which represents the next, and which, the most recent? I'm going to give you some time to figure that out for your essays."

I let the students work on this, and then I said, "So will you get together with your partner and will you talk about your journey of thinking about this book. Say to your partner, 'At first I thought . . . ,' and then tell about whichever idea seems to you to be first in this progression, and then say, 'But recently I realized . . . ,' and share the idea that seems most recent to you. As you do this, will you be thinking about what your *next* idea in this journey of thought is going to be. Turn and talk."

As the students talked, I moved among them. Then I said, "Writers, can I tell you what Rochelle realized as she was talking? She told her partner about how recently she has been thinking that the novel, *Divergent*, is about how it is important to believe in yourself, but when she tried to talk about it, she realized the idea absolutely isn't working for her. She had been trying and trying to find places in the book that showed her idea—but finally she realized she was actually faking it. That wasn't what the book is about at all.

"I think Rochelle realized, too, that sometimes you all are jumping to say that your theme is a cliché: a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush, love makes the world go 'round . . . Very often, you are better off to use your own words to say the ideas that a book has given you. And in any case, if an idea isn't actually fitting the specifics of the book, change the idea! Be like Rochelle."

COLLECTING ENTRIES ABOUT TEXT THEMES

"So writers, tonight you are going to continue collecting entries about the themes in your texts. As you work, I suggest you go back and forth between previous work and today's—that you spend some time writing about the big ideas—the themes—in your texts, but that you also zoom in on critical scenes in your texts to see what those scenes reveal about the theme. By tomorrow you should have at least two more pages written in your notebook—those pages will be entries like earlier ones and today's, so they may be either many shorter entries or several longer ones. Tomorrow will be our last collecting lesson before you select a claim to write on, so the more work you do tonight the more choices you will have tomorrow!"

Session 3

Fine-Tuning Themes by Studying Author's Craft

MANY OF YOU REMEMBER the exhilaration of a time you felt like you really "got" the way in which elements of a story click together to make a statement. What a charge it was to realize that the title, the choice of an opening scene, the characters' names, the repetition of an image—all this and more was done on purpose! Eureka! Perhaps for you, the charge came when you were arguing with passion over *Bridge to Terebithia* or *The Bluest Eye*. Maybe it was a three-in-the-morning epiphany in college when you finally hit on the perfect thesis statement for a paper on *Hamlet*, the claim you had been grasping at for hours.

Chances are, those moments of brilliance came as you pored over details of the texts in question. You dug in, reading and rereading well-loved passages, and suddenly you saw what had been before your eyes all along. It is likely that as you reread, you noticed not just *what* the author was saying in these texts, but *how* the author said it. You mined these texts deeply, sifting through all of the details until bigger and better ideas emerged from your original thinking. You realized that being able to lead others with confidence through your thinking about a story must be the way a tour guide with a flashlight feels—*this* word, *this* metaphor, *this* sentence structure reveals my idea.

This session is about handing your students a flashlight.

Your students will come to this session thinking they have unlocked the secrets of the text they are analyzing. They have spent days generating entries about their ideas about theme, reaching toward a possible claim for their own analytical essays, finding critical scenes in the text to support their thinking. Now you will tell them that the work they have done is a start, not a finish, and they are now ready to reread parts of the story closely, truly looking at the literary choices that the author made. This isn't new work for your students—assuming their seventh-grade teacher taught *Writing About Reading* last year, your students will have had rich experience explaining ways in which authors use craft moves to achieve specific purposes. This unit stands on the shoulders of that one, and specifically, the unit aims to extend the work students have already done in seeing the intersection of theme, structure, and craft.

IN THIS SESSION, you'll teach students that when analyzing a text, literary essayists pay attention to the details of the plot and character development as well as the author's crafting decisions, reflecting on the connection between the author's message and his or her craft.

GETTING READY

- ✔ Student copies of the shared class text "All Summer in a Day" (see Teaching and Active Engagement)
- ✔ "Literary Devices that Authors Use to Highlight Themes" chart (see Teaching and Active Engagement)
- ✔ "How to Write a Thematic Essay" anchor chart (see Link)
- ✔ Student drafts in progress (see Mid-Workshop Teaching)

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS: W.8.1, W.8.3.d, W.8.4, W.8.5, W.8.9.a, RL.8.1, RL.8.2, RL.8.3, RL.8.4, RL.8.10, SL.8.1, SL.8.2, SL.8.3, SL.8.4, SL.8.6, L.8.1, L.8.2, L.8.3, L.8.5

Today, you will teach your students that if their interpretation of a text holds, they should be able to show that craft moves the author used can provide additional evidence for the theme readers see in the text. Today, then, is a day for rereading parts of their novels closely, looking with a magnifying glass at the authorial choices, and testing out, mulling over, the extent to which those do and do not support the thinking students are doing about their text. By tomorrow, you will ask your students to have a claim and plan for their essay. This close, careful rereading and rethinking work will support students in developing even stronger themes and evidence.

"Your thinking about a story must be the way a tour guide feels—this *word,* this *metaphor,* this *sentence structure reveals my idea."*

This work will help students weave a stronger connection between an author's message and his or her craft. In a larger sense, this work helps prepare students for the kinds of literary analysis they'll do in high school and college, moving them further from the temptation of simply mining a text for events or quotes that back up an idea and closer to the work of using an author's style, not just his or her plot, to inform thinking about texts.

MINILESSON

Fine-Tuning Themes by Studying Author's Craft

CONNECTION

Frame a study of author's craft in a way that your students can immediately understand.

"The other night I was out with some friends, and we got to laughing about how we speak. Like, one of my friends always ends her sentences with a question mark? She uptalks? Like all the time? And then my other friend speaks in these urgent short sentences. Like she really means what she is saying. Really. All the time. The way my friends speak is as much a part of them as the qualities they have or their beliefs. In fact, the *way* they speak shows something central about them—when my friend uptalks it shows how much she wants to connect with others, to get them nodding along. And when my other friend speaks abruptly it shows how passionate she is about life. The way they speak is kind of their style, but it's more than that—the way people speak reflects who they are.

"I bet you have a friend or family member who speaks in a really unique way that shows something central about them. Take a second and with your partner—act out how someone you love speaks."

Students began talking to each other and soon the room was full of laughter as kids imitated their loved ones. I brought them together. "So we know that people in our lives talk a certain way, with a certain intonation, or phrasing, or rhythm. And it's not just *what* these people are saying that helps us understand what they mean; *how* they say it plays a part, too. Authors are the same way—authors 'speak' in ways that highlight their central ideas, their themes, and as essayists we can look to their work, notice these choices, and think about them."

Name the teaching point.

"Today I want to teach you that when literary essayists are analyzing a text, they pay careful attention to not just the details of the plot, but to the details of the author's craft as well. There is a connection between the author's message and his or her craft. Literary essayists can use this craft analysis to inform their thinking about the text."

◆ COACHING

In this connection, we aim to try and make what sometimes feels remote for students—author's craft—more relatable, by linking it to a way of seeing the world that our middle-schoolers will be very familiar with. While the link may not be exact—the way a person speaks is not precisely the same thing as an author's craft—making this connection serves the higher purpose of making the work of analyzing an author's craft feel more accessible.

SAMPLE BEND

TEACHING AND ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

Teach writers it helps to revisit critical scenes that reveal the theme, noting the craft moves the author has used and reflecting on their purpose.

"So, writers, we spoke previously about how, when preparing to write a literary essay that explores a theme in the text, essayists look for critical scenes that advance their ideas about the text, rereading these scenes closely. But another thing that essayists should examine is the crafting decisions that the author has made. Were there specific literary devices the author used to advance his or her message?

Pulling out my copy of the short story, I continued. "Let's work on this idea I had about jealousy making people selfish, and blind to others. Again, I am going to look for a critical scene. I think the scene when the children lock Margot in the closet is crucial, so let's go back there, and this time, as we reread, let's take a close look at the author's craft.

"Okay, so we have our idea (jealousy making people selfish and blind to others), our critical scene (the one where the children lock Margot in the closet), and now, let's look for any literary devices or craft moves that Bradbury uses that might help us see more about our idea. You know some literary devices I am sure, but I jotted a quick list of common ones to remind you."

Literary Devices that Authors Use to Highlight Themes

- ✓ Comparisons (metaphors and similes)
- ✓ Alliteration
- ✓ Repetition
- ✓ Descriptive words or sentences
- ✓ Personification
- ✓ Short and long sentences (sentence variety)

"Writers, listen to this passage, and this time, be on the lookout for the literary devices that Bradbury uses."

> *"Oh, but," Margot whispered, her eyes helpless. "But this is the day, the scientists predict, they say, they* know, *the sun . . ."*
>
> *"All a joke!" said the boy, and seized her roughly. "Hey, everyone, let's put her in a closet, before the teacher comes."*
>
> *"No," said Margot, falling back.*
>
> *They surged about her, caught her up and bore her, protesting, and then pleading, and then crying, back into a tunnel, a room, a closet, where they slammed and locked the door. They stood looking at the door and saw it tremble from her beating and throwing herself against it. They heard her muffled cries. Then, smiling, they turned and went out and back down the tunnel, just as the teacher arrived.*

You might alter this list to make sure it encompasses the literary devices in the major texts that have been under study in your classroom. Don't necessarily avoid a device because the class hasn't formally studied it. You can tuck in a bit of explanation; human beings learn language by immersion.

"Quick! Tell your partner one craft move you noticed!"

The students talked no more than thirty seconds, and I said, "I love that you were referring to the literary devices using the academic names for them, and pointing to or citing examples from the text. One thing a lot of you said is that there is a lot of descriptive language here—Margot's 'helpless eyes' or the way she was 'seized, roughly' and the way the students 'surged about her.' I also heard people talking about that long sentence with lots of commas," and I pointed to the line in the passage, "when the students are shoving her down the hallways and into the closet, and Margot is 'protesting, and then pleading, and then crying . . .' So now that we've noticed these moves, what do they show us about our idea that jealousy can make people selfish and blind to others? Think for a moment and give me a thumbs up when you might have an idea."

Even though I am going to be asking the class to discuss their thinking with their partner, I give them a chance to think before they do. When asking students to think about something challenging—like how craft illustrates a theme—it is helpful if you give the class a moment of silence to get their thoughts in order before asking them to talk or write.

Use your observations on craft to help you think more deeply about the theme. Enlist the class to help you in this work.

I called the group back together. "I'll start and show you a bit of what I was thinking, and see how it matches your idea. Like you, I first noticed the descriptive language that Bradbury was using. He really wants us to feel how helpless Margot is, so he shows her 'whispering,' and he really wants us to feel how swept up the children get that they 'surge' around her. I even think that long sentence is there to kind of show how swept up the children are, like they are a wave almost, not even thinking about what they are doing . . . Oh but wait. This is good work, but it doesn't really connect to my idea that jealousy can make you selfish or blind to others. Can you turn and talk for a moment—what do these craft moves make you think about this idea? You could always start with a prompt, like 'This makes me realize . . .' or 'This connect to the idea of . . . by . . .'"

The class began to talk. As I listened in to Alec and Ray I heard Alec say, "Well, I guess it's like, jealousy makes you selfish but also that this has, like, well it hurts people."

Ray shrugged, "Yeah it has consequences." I patted them on the back and moved on to Myah and Shirley, who were off task.

"What were you thinking Myah?" I asked pointedly.

Myah giggled. "Oh! Um. That . . . , that, the craft shows the theme really well." Shirley laughed. I asked her to say more. "Yeah. The, um, descriptive language really um, shows that jealousy makes you selfish."

Notice that although Myah and Shirley were off task and were not particularly thoughtful about their work, I still highlighted the strategy they used (with my help). While many students may reach toward thinking more deeply about their themes from their observations of craft, many more will see the craft moves as more evidence for their theme—this is good work that most students will be able to achieve today, and I want to highlight that here.

I pulled the class together. "So I want to point something out—Myah and Shirley worked together to say how the craft moves show or advance the theme. They basically said that 'This craft really highlights the theme of the text.' That's great work. Alec and Ray did something a little different. They used the work they did with craft to add to their thinking of the theme. Both ways of working are great."

Show students an entry that they can use as a model for their work.

So before you go off to write today, I just want to show you an entry I wrote last night that does this work. Can you look at it and tell me a few things I do to be sure I both focus on the craft of the text and connect that craft to the theme?"

> In this scene, Bradbury uses descriptive language to show how vulnerable Margot is, and he uses long sentences to show how the children have gotten swept up in their jealousy. **This connects to the idea** that jealousy makes you blind to others, **because** the children cannot see how much they are hurting Margot. The long sentence, "They surged about her, caught her up and bore her, protesting, and then pleading, and then crying, back into a tunnel, a room, a closet, where they slammed and locked the door," shows them almost not knowing what they were doing. They are caught up in their own jealousy. **This makes me realize that** this story shows us that when you get caught up in your own pain, you can hurt other people. Bradbury **uses** descriptive language and long sentences **to illustrate** how out of control the children have become because of their jealousy.

"Can you raise your hand if you noticed me doing something that helped connect the craft of the story to my theme? Okay, put your hand down when I say what you noticed. So first, I used thought prompts, like 'This connects to the idea . . .' and 'This makes me realize.' That helped me to remember that I was using this entry to think more deeply about my universal theme." Hands dropped all over the room, except for one. I called on Aren.

Aren cleared his throat. "You also at the end said, um, what the craft moves like did. You said kind of 'The author uses blank to illustrate blank.'"

LINK

Urge students to make thoughtful choices as they write, today and every day.

I reconvened the class. "Writers, this is some powerful work you've been trying today. You've learned that one way to look more closely at a theme is to examine the authorial decisions that were made in key scenes, thinking about what that might reveal about the theme you are considering.

"This is going to be the last day that we collect entries for themes for our essays, so you will want to use the time wisely. By the end of today I am going to ask you to start writing your claims for your essays. That means you can use any of the strategies we have studied so far to keep yourself working thoughtfully." I added another bullet to our anchor chart.

It's useful to gear your teaching toward the predictable problems your students will have with the work of a particular session, rather than waiting for the problem to emerge. Here I address one likely stumble that students will make—getting so caught up in describing and thinking about craft that they forget their bigger purpose in doing so. I make sure to tie my theme back into my entry, using familiar thought prompts that they too can use.

How to Write a Thematic Essay

- Collect ideas about the themes in a text.
  1. Name a central problem or issue that characters in the story face.
  2. Reflect on parts of the story that pertain to this problem.
  3. Think to yourself, "What is this story teaching me about this problem, this issue?"
  4. Write long about your thinking to grow your ideas, perhaps by asking how different characters relate to that issue.
- Go back to the text and reread closely to see how the theme works in certain critical scenes.
- **Look for purposeful craft moves the author used and think about how they reveal more about the theme.**

"You'll want to get a lot done today. You should have another two pages in your notebook, at least, by the end of class, so keep going strong today!"

Keeping Momentum High with Your Conferences and Small Groups

ON THE FIRST DAYS OF THIS UNIT, you may have found that you did more small-group teaching than conferring, trying to get as many students as possible moving in productive directions. Typically, though, you will probably aim to conduct a mix of a few conferences and a few small groups in each day's workshop. Much of your job, as you confer and teach small groups, will be to keep this energy and urgency up while providing specific tips and teaching to support students in their work.

You may decide, today, to pull a group of students to support them in analyzing their craft discoveries. These students might be eagerly diving in, pen in hand, underlining or circling similes and metaphors, or repeated phrases, but if they are simply listing the fact that an author used a device in his writing, unaccompanied by any analysis or thinking, as proof of their claim, you will want to intervene and support them in this work. Using a few prompts can help these writers say what they mean to say. Try offering prompts like, "I think the author did this to show . . ." or "The author could have . . . but instead . . . because . . ." These scaffolds can help hoist students up to levels that they are capable of working within, but are not independent with yet.

You might also see a need for some small-group work and conferring today that is angled to help students transfer your teaching from the minilessons and the whole-class shared text to their own texts. Here are a few tips you'll probably find yourself giving in either small groups, conferences, or voiceovers:

- Instead of combing the text looking for times an author used literary devices, it usually works to turn to portions of the book that made a deep impression, that were especially potent, and to reread those parts of the text, asking, "What did the author do here that made this passage so powerful?" It probably works to

MID-WORKSHOP TEACHING **Adopting the Voice of a Literary Scholar**

"Writers, hold up for one second. I just noticed Molly rereading her draft, crossing out some phrases and substituting others. I asked her to explain, and listen to what she said.

"Molly said, 'Well, I just thought I could take out the places where I used plain words to describe what an author had done, like when I said the author used repeated sounds. I crossed that out and said the author uses *alliteration*. It just sounds better.'"

Then I added, "I was so excited by Molly's work that she and I started looking all over her draft for places where her words could sound more scholarly. We pretended to be professors in college, lecturing each other about the text. Check out the changes. I'll read lines from Molly's first draft, then she'll read how those same lines go in her new draft."

I read Molly's first draft:

The repeated sounds make it feel like you are in the action of the scene.

And then Molly read:

Collins's use of alliteration plunges the reader into the action of the scene.

"Right now, take the last few sentences you just wrote and you have three minutes to rewrite those sentences to make them more scholarly. Go!" After three minutes, I asked students to show each other what they'd done, and then I said, "As you go forward, see if you can find places where your language can become more scholarly."

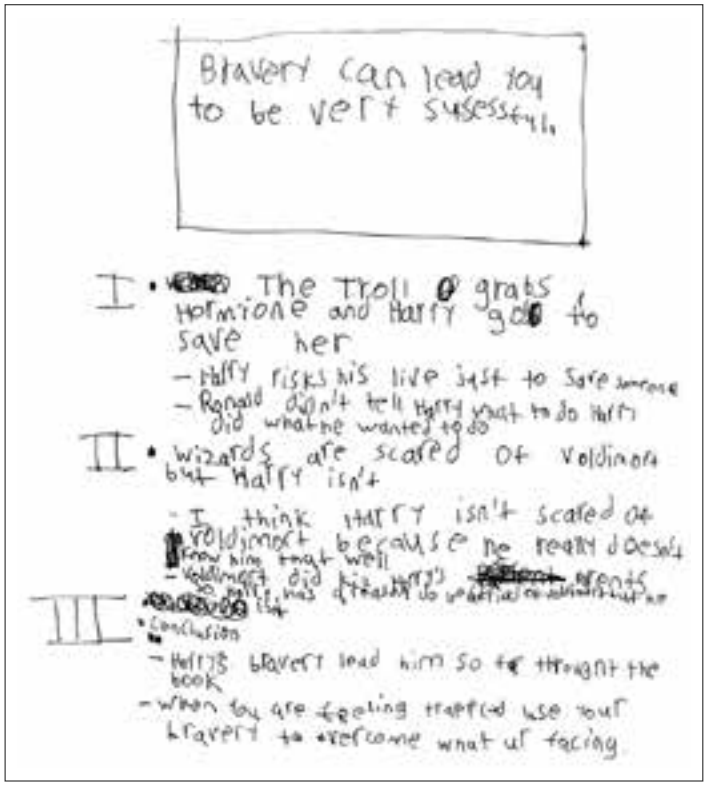


FIG. 3–1 Raymond notes specific instances that support his thesis.

reread that brief passage a number of times, looking for both the smaller and the larger moves an author made.

- Sometimes students will seem very skilled at locating places in the text when the author wrote beautifully, and less able to use the technical language—simile, metaphor, personification, and the like—to name what the author has done. In such an instance, *you* will want to name what you see. Come straight out and tell the student you notice that he or she shies away from the technical domain-specific language. Then you can encourage the student to remember that this is a time for drafting, for messing up, for trying things out—even if it's new or feels difficult.
- As you confer, if you sense that these students do, in fact, know that authors make comparisons to things, but can't remember exactly what *metaphor* means, take a moment and let your students explore the text unencumbered by lists of devices. Have them simply notice things that they think the author did to make his or her writing interesting—phrases or sentences that pop out. As they do, encourage them to look at the list you offered earlier and see if any of the academic language there resonates for them.

As you do this work, help students to understand that words have tone. A story is not just set in winter—winter can be glistening, white, full of promise, or winter can bury everything and everyone, creating a barren landscape. Winter can bring people in before the fire, or make a person wrap her arms around herself and curl into a ball, blowing into her hands, her face buried into the collar. This kind of craft can be another way that writers advance a theme, and students would be wise to draw on this as a source of potential craft-as-evidence.

SHARE

Writing Claims

Coach your students to revise their claims and essay plans based on their work today.

"Writers, as we end class today, I want to remind you that tomorrow you are going to begin drafting your essays. Before you do that, you need to return to the claims and, in fact, the essays you planned last night and revise those plans based on what you learned today. Quick, you have four minutes to start that work!"

As students talked and worked, I revealed a plan I'd written for the essay I'd planned:

Possible Claims for "All Summer in a Day"

Jealousy makes people selfish.

When jealousy and grief get the best of us, everyone suffers.

When you act out of jealousy, you will feel guilty.

It is difficult to watch someone grieve what you never had.

After a few minutes, I said, "Eyes up here," and waited for students' attention. "Remember that your thesis needs to encompass the whole text. I decided that my second idea" (and I pointed to the list of claims), "the idea that if you let jealousy and grief get the better of you, everyone suffers, is everywhere in the story I'm analyzing, so I chose that one."

Let students know what they need to do tonight to be prepared for tomorrow.

"By tomorrow you will need the essay you will write all planned out. To do that you need a claim, a thesis, that applies to most of the story. To test out whether the theme works, you need to imagine the parts of your essay—the topic sentences, and the evidence you think you will use. So come in with the thesis—and the plan for the essay you've settled on, after the work you did today. Make sure you have thought about how you will have two or three body paragraphs that support your thesis, writing the topic sentences for them, and make sure you jot down page numbers where you will find your evidence.

Although I didn't detail this to the students, I think the first idea is a small idea. I could maybe stretch it out into a whole essay but I don't really see why I would—it's almost too easy. I think the same thing is true of the third idea—that you feel guilty. Also this idea just kind of happens at the end so it doesn't really cover the whole story. The last idea also pertains just to that one scene when Margot is looking out the window. So that is why I settled on the second idea.

FINDING AND TESTING A THESIS FOR YOUR ESSAY

"For homework tonight, first, be sure that you are ready to write your essay tomorrow, from start to finish. That means you will walk in tomorrow with some kind of outline—boxes and bullets or another form that works for you. If you try more than one, bring in all of the drafts of your plan."

Session 4

Drafting Essays

IN THIS SESSION, you'll teach students that when getting ready to draft, writers recall what they already know about the genre they are writing in, as well as examine mentor texts in that genre, to make a plan and set goals for their writing.

GETTING READY

- ✔ Chart paper and marker (see Connection)
- ✔ Teacher model essay on "All Summer in a Day" enlarged for students to see, if possible, as well as copies for each student. We use draft portions (as seen throughout the session). (see Teaching and Active Engagement).
- ✔ "What Makes a Great Essay?" chart (see Active Engagement)
- ✔ "How to Write a Thematic Essay" anchor chart (see Link)
- ✔ Copies of the Grade 7 Argument Writing Checklist, one per student (see Share)

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS: W.8.1, W.8.4, W.8.5, W.8.9.a, W.8.10, RL.8.1, RL.8.2, RL.8.3, RL.8.4, SL.8.1, SL.8.2, SL.8.4, L.8.1, L.8.2, L.8.3, L.8.6

MOST OF YOU KNOW the iconic song lyric, "I get by with a little help from my friends." More likely than not, you have a memory of being at a party when this song was played—you may remember how groups of people began singing aloud, grabbing onto nearby friends and raising voices together for the chorus. Even if you don't actually *like* the song, there is something about it—the acknowledgment of the importance of friendship, the admittance that we cannot do it alone, the celebration of those who have helped us—that leads you to hum the bars.

That is the spirit of this session.

Today will be an important day because your students will flash-draft an entire literary essay. Some may not finish it in class, and so they will continue working at home. You should expect this essay to be about three pages in length—and that by the time this unit is completed, students will write essays that are substantially longer than that. This is a tall order, but the good thing is that today, you will provide students with lots of help getting this done. Your teaching today will have two main goals—one, to help your students draft an essay about the theme of a text. Secondly, and most importantly, will be teaching your students to use the "friends" they have in the room. In this case their friends will take the form of mentor essays that will help your students make plans for their work, reminding them of what they know about essay writing, and helping them set new goals.

If your school has embraced this series, your students will have written thematic essays in sixth grade, and they will have worked on their writing about reading skills (and on their argument writing skills) in seventh. They are not coming to you as blank slates.

By teaching students to use a mentor essay to help them make a plan, remembering what they know and setting new goals, you are placing on your students' shoulders the burden of responsibility to problem solve and to draw upon past teaching. This is important. You don't want to devote weeks to reteaching, and that kind of hand-holding is not what's best for students. Today, your teaching will help your students solve the problems they face, recalling what they've already learned.

MINILESSON

Drafting Essays

CONNECTION

Point out the importance of being able to write quickly and on demand. Activate your students' prior knowledge about essay writing through discussion.

"Writers, today you will write an essay, so I want to use this minilesson to do some last-minute teaching—not only about essay writing, but also about becoming more independent. As you become an adult, one of the skills you need to develop is that of being able to get yourself started on a writing project and to work more on-demand—doing your own thinking, planning, and writing without support.

"When you are working on a complex project like doing a major piece of writing, it helps to get your mind ready for the work by recalling what you already know how to do. So can you discuss with your partner some of the things that make for a good essay?" The class began to talk, and I circled around like a newspaper reporter, recording on a pad what I heard them say to each other. After seconds, I gathered the class together.

"I am going to list out a couple of things you said make for good essays . . ." I started a new chart. "First, Winnie and Jonathan said that you need an idea for the essay—a claim. Then Lucas and Glen said that essays have a way they go—an introduction, some body paragraphs, and a conclusion. And Hiram and Mark said that essays always have evidence to support the ideas they put forward. This is a great list."

✤ Name the teaching point.

"Today I want to teach you that when essayists get ready to draft, they think about what they already know about essay writing. To do this, they sometimes use other people's essays to help them make a plan, to remind them of what they have learned before, and to set new goals. Then they write, long and strong, finishing their draft in short order."

◆ COACHING

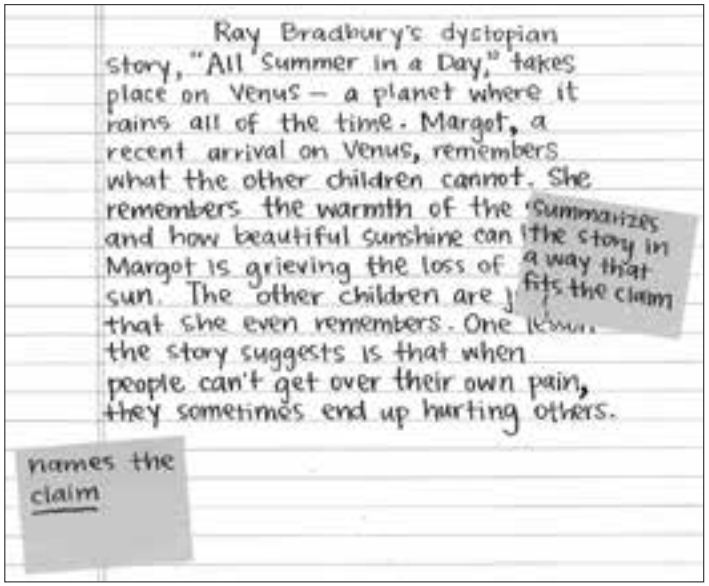
Pacing is all-important. So when your students were younger and newer to the work of writing essays, you led them step by step through this process. By now, you should not need to do so. But if you find that you have some students who need more help, you can always refer to the sixth-grade book, for example, for help scaffolding.

This chart gets expanded on later in this minilesson.

TEACHING

Show how you read a mentor essay—in this case your draft—analyzing structure and craft and listing what is evident in the mentor essay that can be used to guide future writing.

"Will you take a look at a draft of an essay I started based on our discussion in class about 'All Summer in a Day'? It's a rough draft essay, but I suspect there are some moves that I did in this draft that you could try. Let's read the first paragraph and then stop to name the things that I do here that you could try. Then we can read on and do that again for paragraph two." I quickly distributed copies of the essay to students and read aloud the opening paragraph of the essay:



Ray Bradbury's dystopian story, "All Summer in a Day," takes place on Venus–a planet where it rains all of the time. Margot, a recent arrival on Venus, remembers what the other children cannot. She remembers the warmth of the sun and how beautiful sunshine can be. Margot is grieving the loss of the sun. The other children are jealous that she even remembers. One lesson the story suggests is that when people can't get over their own pain, they sometimes wind up hurting others.

It will help your students to see how you visually annotate the text in a way that would help you as a writer, rather than just relying on them listening and following along. This gives them a model of the level of detail you expect and will highlight how much can be learned from even a single paragraph, perhaps heading off the brief skim-and-underline-at-random work some of your students might be tempted to do. You might enlarge the text and hang it up, or display it on a document camera, projector, or Smart Board. As you annotate this introductory paragraph, explicitly highlight for students the essay-crafting decisions you are noticing, such as naming the author and title, summarizing the story in a way that fits the claim, and finally, naming the claim.

"So one thing I notice is how, right away, I name the author and the title, right there in my introduction, and then I go on to kind of summarize the story in a way that fits the claim. Finally, I name the claim." As I talked, I annotated the essay, underlining parts of the essay and jotting a bit next to what I have underlined.

"So, if I were to take a step back and study my draft, I might be able to add a few more items to our 'What Makes a Great Essay' chart."

ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

Give students the opportunity to study and annotate more of the text, looking for essay moves that will help them in their own writing today. Then collect those moves by adding them onto your ongoing chart.

"So now while you are sitting with your partners, take a moment and go through the next part of this essay, annotating what you notice. I'm going to enlarge just the next two paragraphs, but if you want to go ahead and annotate the whole essay on your copy, by all means go ahead!"

You might consider numbering lines or paragraphs before you distribute the text, so that students can easily reference which parts of the essay they are referring to while discussing with the entire class. This mentor text is my own draft of an essay. I have written it to reflect the teaching I know they have had in the past—and so it is a reasonable goal for them to reach today. As the unit changes, this essay will change too, getting better in front of their eyes.

From the very beginning, the details in the story show the children's pain. They are painfully jealous because Margot has seen the sun and they have not. Bradbury describes how "Margot stood apart from them, from these children who could never remember a time when there wasn't rain and rain and rain. They were all nine years old, and if there had been a day, seven years ago, when the sun came out for an hour and showed its face to the stunned world, they could not recall." This line shows that Margot, it turns out, lived on Earth once, and she has seen the sun. The other children have not, and she makes their world of dreary rain even more painful to them.

Another detail that shows the children's pain is that while they have never seen the sun, they dream of it every night. They dream of gold and yellow and warmth–"but then they always awoke to the tatting drum, the endless shaking down of clear bead necklaces upon the roof, the walk, the gardens, the forests, and their dreams were gone." This shows that clearly the children long for the sun but all they experience is the endless rain. It's not some kind of life-giving rain in this story. It's an awful, heavy rain. In the story it says, "a thousand forests had been crushed under the rain and grown up a thousand times to be crushed again and again." It seems as if the rain is making the children desperate, which might be why they want to hurt Margot.

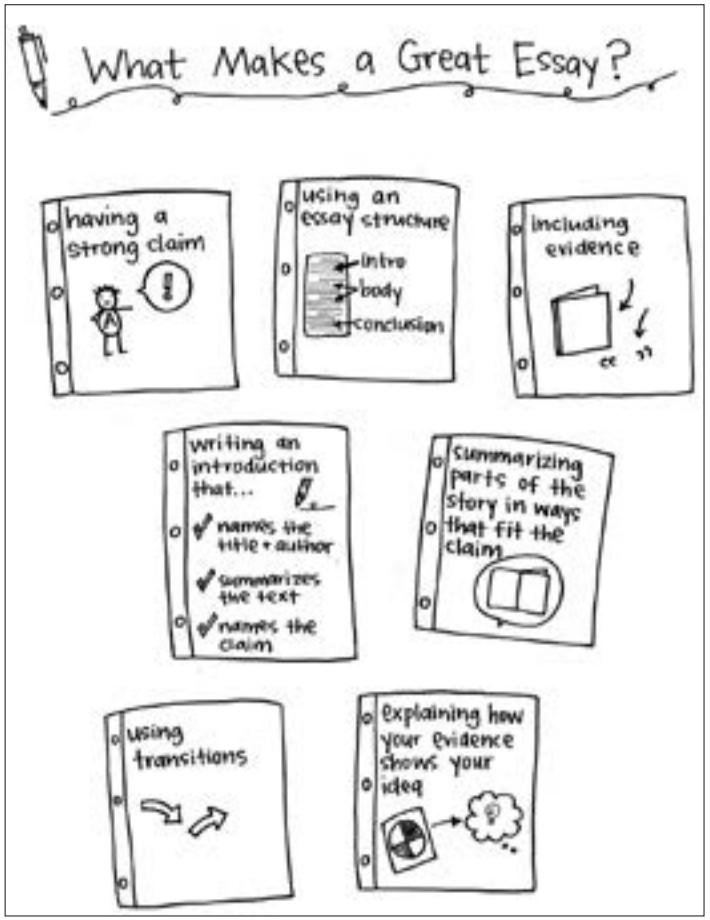
I circled around the room listening in, helping students with the academic language they needed to describe the parts of an essay. Lauren and Claire seemed a little stuck, so I provided some coaching. "One way to get started is just to underline and annotate when you see the same stuff that's on the list we created about great essays, like maybe how I use evidence from the text. Then you could try to say a little bit more, like what kind of evidence. Try that now."

Hiram was working alone. His partner, Mark, was staring out of the window. I went over to them. "Hey guys, what's going on?" Both shrugged. Mark said, "I'm done." I looked at his sheet—marked with only two underlines and barely an annotation to be seen.

"Okay," I said. "You know my job is to push you even when you are finished, so bear with me. In the next thirty seconds, I am willing to bet you could find . . . two more things in this essay. You could use Hiram for support if you want. Try it. Two more things. I believe in you." Mark scowled and reluctantly picked up his pencil.

I added a few bullets based on what I heard students talking about to the ongoing "What Makes a Great Essay?" chart.

As I continued coaching into what students did, I reminded them to look for the types of evidence essayists use, particularly quotes from the text, and how those quotes were introduced and then explained. I also reminded students to look for transition phrases and clear connections to the claim.



LINK

Make clear your expectations for the class. Remind students that there are many ways to get to the destination.

"Writers, your work today is to use all that you know to write the best essay you can. But you do not have to do this alone—you have this mentor essay to help you. You also have your writing partner. Don't be afraid to ask for ideas if you get stuck. You also have our charts—you can draw on either one to help you. If you want reminders about how great essays (of any sort) go, rely on this chart," and I gestured toward "What Makes a Great Essay?" "If you want reminders about how to do the specific work of developing a theme-based essay you will want to lean on this chart," and I gestured to "How to Write a Thematic Essay."

If you have copies of essays your students wrote previously, you might also distribute those prior writing to their work spots. Actually seeing an example of their own writing is a powerful visual cue for young writers, and helps remind them of what they already know but have forgotten.

How to Write a Thematic Essay

- Collect ideas about the themes in a text.
  1. Name a central problem or issue that characters in the story face.
  2. Reflect on parts of the story that pertain to this problem.
  3. Think to yourself, "What is this story teaching me about this problem, this issue?"
  4. Write long about your thinking to grow your ideas, perhaps by asking how different characters relate to that issue.
- Go back to the text and reread closely to see how the theme works in certain critical scenes.
- Look for purposeful craft moves the author used and think about how they reveal more about the theme.
- **Write a claim and a plan for your essay and use a mentor text to begin drafting.**

"Some of you will be ready to write right away; others of you will want to plan for a few minutes or to spend a bit more time studying the draft I just showed you. Choose whatever you need to do to work powerfully as a writer today. Get to work."

Supporting Students' Drafting with Targeted Voiceovers, Conferences, and Small Groups

TODAY, AS STUDENTS DRAFT, you will want to move almost as quickly as your students need to write! As you move around the room, conferring and perhaps conducting some quick table conferences, you'll sense some of the pointers that would be helpful to many students. Don't hesitate to call these out as voiceovers, saying things like:

> "Don't forget—the evidence will make your essay come to life. Open up the text and find the exact words you want to use!"
>
> "If you aren't sure how to organize your essay, you could trace how the theme changes across the text, saying 'In the beginning . . . In the middle . . .' Then again, you might consider the reasons or ways that the theme is true."
>
> "Don't forget to indent!"
>
> "Push yourselves as hard as you can today, writers. I know you can do it! Challenge yourselves to get to the bottom of the page, be your own cheerleader—just keep going!"

You may also find it helpful to give yourself the task of spending a few minutes out of your conferring time looking just for what's working. Find those students whose pens are flying down the page, or who are consulting charts to help them, or who are seamlessly blending quotes into their drafts with powerful transitions, and consider publicly praising them through another voiceover, which will hopefully spur your other writers to do the same things.

As you move around the room, it will help today (as every day) to carry some carefully selected tools with you. Today it might be especially useful to have a copy of the mentor text you've shown the class, and perhaps a copy of a few different structures for the same essay, to support those students who are trying to draft from structures that don't work so well. You could use a student's work, perhaps pulled from an earlier class period, or it might need to be your essay, in which case you could use these examples.

> One theme the story suggests is that when people can't get over their own pain, they sometimes wind up hurting others.
>
> ✓ In the beginning, we see how much pain everyone is in.
>
> ✓ In the middle, we see how Margot's grief hurts the children.
>
> ✓ At the end, the children's jealousy hurts Margot.
>
> One theme the story suggests is that when people can't get over their own pain, they sometimes wind up hurting others.
>
> ✓ When Margot can't get over her own grief, this impacts her relationship with the other children, and rubs salt in their wounds.
>
> ✓ When the other children can't get over their own jealousy, they treat Margot terribly, and end up hurting her.

On the other hand, you might find a few students who are getting less drafting done because they keep returning to their outlines to make small changes. This indecisive small group could be pushed to move faster and make a decision, perhaps by laying out their options in front of them and putting a bit of time pressure on them to make a choice, change what needs changing, and move to drafting right there in the group. You don't want students spending more than a few minutes outlining and planning, so coach and nudge them, then celebrate the choice they do make. But despite your own sense of time pressure, don't make the choice for them—they should still feel the burn of trying to solve an intellectual problem—just with you there as a cheerleader and strategy resource.

MID-WORKSHOP TEACHING **Remembering the Power of Evidence**

"Class, pause for one moment. I have got to give Terrell a serious public high-five. He was cruising along in his essay, drafting like crazy, when he stopped and realized he had forgotten to include any real evidence from the text. I mean, he had sort of mentioned a scene here and there, but he hadn't really focused in on specifics in the text and how they showed his theme. So he stopped, went back to the text, and found some evidence. Terrell, what did you add to your piece?"

"Quotes," Terrell said, somewhat unenthusiastically. I responded with even more enthusiasm—"Yes! Quotes! Remember that from your past teaching—that a great way to be sure you have evidence from a text is to quote it. Take a second right now and make sure you have quotes in your drafts, and if you don't, I am sure Terrell would be happy to help you, right Terrell?"

Terrell smiled very slightly. "Sure."

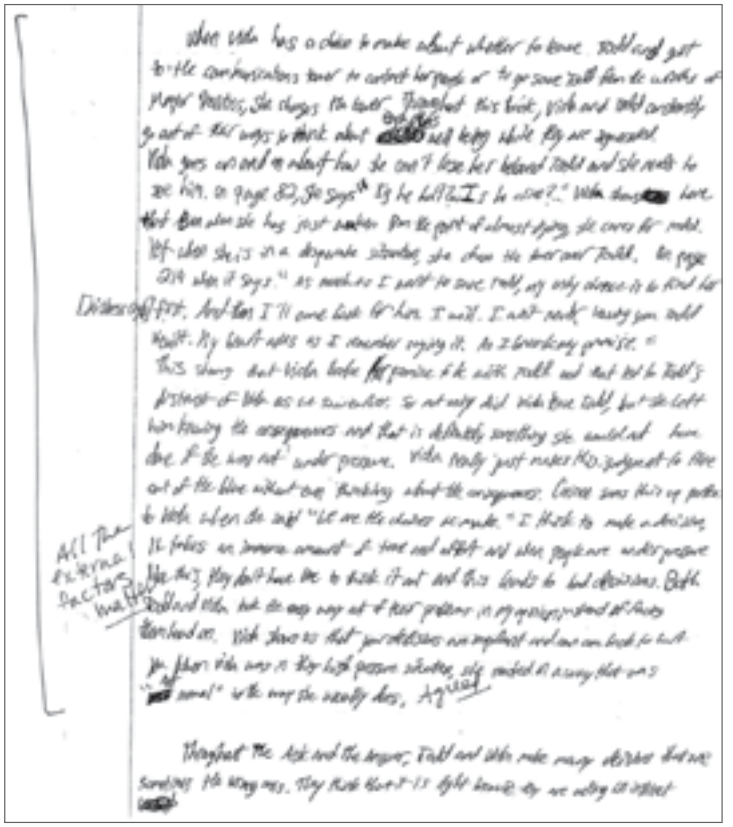


FIG. 4–1 Quotes are a source of evidence from the text.

SHARE

Revising as You Draft

Point out all that your class has learned the last few days. Urge students to reflect on how much they would change about their essays now that they have learned more.

"Right now, will you take stock of what you have learned over the past few days and then look at your essays, with help from your partner, and think—is there more I could do to make my essay show all my knowledge about writing literary essays?"

Channel students to plan their homework.

The students talked, and I listened in and coached. Then I said, "So for me, once I have a sense of what I *could* change in my draft, I have to make a decision. Do I just mark up my draft with what revision I could do later, or do I want to spend a little time right now, fixing things. Take a moment and make that decision, either with a partner or by yourself. Then make a quick To-Do list for your homework tonight, right on your draft."

Argument Writing Checklist

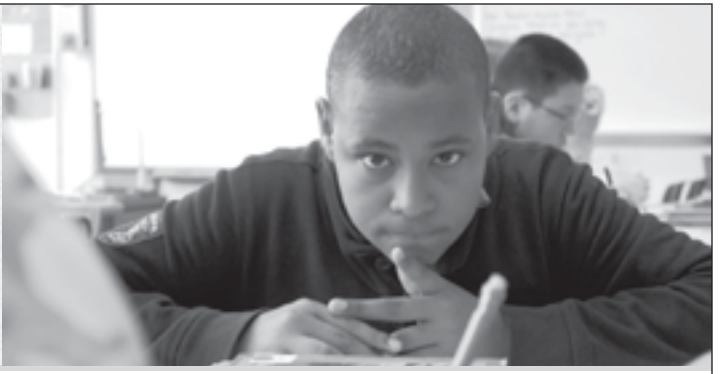
	Grade 7	NOT YET	STARTING TO	YES!
	Structure			
Overall	I laid out a well-supported argument and made it clear that this argument is part of a bigger conversation about a topic/text. I acknowledged positions on the topic or text that might disagree with my own position, but I still showed why my position makes sense.	☐	☐	☐
Lead	I interested the reader in my argument and helped them to understand the backstory behind it. I gave the backstory in a way that got the reader ready to see my point.	☐	☐	☐
	I made it clear to readers what my piece will argue and forecasted the parts of my argument.	☐	☐	☐
Transitions	I used transitions to link the parts of my argument. The transitions help the reader follow from part to part and make it clear when I am stating a claim or counterclaim, giving a reason, or offering or analyzing evidence. These transitions include terms such as *as the text states, this means, another reason, some people may say, but, nevertheless,* and *on the other hand.*	☐	☐	☐
Ending	In my conclusion, I reinforced and built on the main point(s) in a way that makes the entire text a cohesive whole. The conclusion may reiterate how the support for my claim outweighed the counterclaim(s), restate the main points, respond to them, or highlight their significance.	☐	☐	☐
Organization	The parts of my piece are arranged purposefully to suit my purpose and to lead readers from one claim or counterclaim, reason, or piece of evidence to another.	☐	☐	☐
	I used topic sentences, transitions, and formatting (where appropriate) to clarify the structure of the piece and to highlight my main points.	☐	☐	☐
	Development			
Elaboration	I included varied kinds of evidence such as facts, quotations, examples, and definitions. I analyzed or explained the reasons and evidence, showing how they fit with my claim(s) and build my argument.	☐	☐	☐
	I consistently incorporated and cited trustworthy sources.	☐	☐	☐
	I wrote about another possible position or positions—a different claim or claims about this subject—and explained why the evidence for my position outweighed the counterclaim(s).	☐	☐	☐
	I worked to make my argument compelling as well as understandable. I brought out why it mattered and why the audience should care about it.	☐	☐	☐

REVISING YOUR ESSAYS

"So tonight, your homework is to work on your essays. Your good first draft is due tomorrow, so pace yourself accordingly. One of your jobs as eighth-graders is to learn how to use your time well. If any of you have any questions about what choice to make, stay after class or see me at lunch to talk it over. I am happy to help."

Session 5

Finding the Courage to Revise Your Thinking



A WHOLE HOST OF WRITERS have written about revision in memorable ways. John Updike wrote, "Writing and rewriting are a constant search for what it is one is saying." Raymond Chandler wrote, charmingly, "Throw up into your typewriter every morning. Clean it up every noon." Then of course there is the famous line, "In writing, you must kill all your darlings." There's probably a reason why so much of the advice about revision talks about cutting, cleaning up, even murdering, rather than adding or rearranging. The hardest, but most productive, revision often happens when writers take on the emotional as well as intellectual challenge of holding their ideas up to scrutiny and cutting them, if necessary. This—the cutting and cleaning of ideas—is the kind of work you'll want your students to be doing as they look at a complete or near-complete draft of their essay.

You have likely encountered the problem that this session tackles—when kids think of revision, they are apt to think small, instead of engaging in some large-scale rethinking. If your students have grown up in our units of study, they have been taught, coached, and encouraged for years to see revision as larger than adjusting sentences here and there, to see it as actually reimagining the texts they are writing. Nonetheless, you can probably foresee that your students may doggedly pursue an idea that just doesn't work, forcing evidence into paragraphs awkwardly so they can keep their original plan intact.

In this session, you'll invite your eighth-graders to not only revise their thinking, but also to actively seek out opportunities to do this. This will, of course, lead many of your students to rewrite and reshape their pieces in a variety of ways, leaning on revision strategies they bring from all their prior writing experience. But the heart of this session flows from the last few sessions, as well as from the Common Core Anchor Standard 1 for Writing, which asks students to use "valid reasoning" to support their claims. Part of having valid reasoning is critiquing the reasoning you have, and today you will help your class to see how to do this as writers, thinkers, and students.

IN THIS SESSION, you'll teach students that essay writers often have to stop at the end of a draft and ask themselves—are all of my original ideas still true? Is there anything I should change? If so, writers then have the courage to revise their thinking.

GETTING READY

- ✔ Students' drafts (see Connection and Active Engagement)
- ✔ Grade 7 Argument Writing Checklist, one copy for each student (see Teaching, Active Engagement, and Homework)
- ✔ A section of your draft that is not working, enlarged for students to see (see Teaching)
- ✔ "How to Write a Thematic Essay" anchor chart (see Link)
- ✔ Students' writer's notebooks (see Share)

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS: W.8.1, W.8.5, W.8.9.a, RL.8,1, RL.8.2, RL.8.3, RL.8.4, SL.8.1, L.8.1, L.8.2, L.8.3

MINILESSON

Finding the Courage to Revise Your Thinking

CONNECTION

Help students to hold themselves accountable for getting work done.

"Before we go any further today, I know how hard you worked in the previous session. Show your partner your essay! How did writing go for you?"

As students talked, I scooted from partnership to partnership. Winnie and Jonathan flipped through pages of their work. Winnie said, "I didn't finish this paragraph because I wasn't sure what to say, like, what evidence to use, but I wrote everything else, and it's pretty good." Meanwhile, I kept an eye on Antoine and Myah, who were avoiding talking about what they did the night before. I leaned in, asking, "So what happened?"

Myah guiltily met my eye. "Well, I had soccer practice . . ." I frowned, trying to make my look one of confusion. "Aren't you so disappointed? I am! Your essay was due today—completed. Antoine, you ought to use this time to help Myah make a plan for how she'll be able to catch up today and tonight."

Set students up to recognize how and when today's teaching point might help them.

"Writers," I said, getting the class's attention, "I'm glad that almost all of you are coming in with a finished draft. And I'm also glad that many of you talked about this as *a draft*. Today begins some really powerful work because now, once you have a draft on the page, is the time to reread your own writing and to make your best work a lot better."

Name the teaching point.

"Today I want to remind you that essayists, like all writers, bring their reading skills to their writing. When a draft is done, writers become readers, rereading the draft to think, 'How does this match my internal checklist for—in this instance—argument essays?' Writers also read asking, 'Can I follow my own thinking? Does it ring true?' And when they find problems, writers have the courage to fix them—even if it means changing some of their original ideas."

◆ COACHING

In middle school, the social energy is what keeps students doing their work. Making time—even two minutes—for checking in with each other on homework is an important way to hold students accountable. When you encounter students who have not done their work, as you inevitably will, be sure that you don't say, "Oh well, talk about the topic anyway," as if it is not a big deal whether they did the work at home or not. Instead, make it seem like a very big issue that work wasn't done that is essential to the whole operation.

TEACHING

Demonstrate how you use the checklist to find trouble in a part of your essay.

"Today, I'm going to suggest you all take the first ten minutes of writing time to become readers, and to use your best reading skills to reread your writing really well, making plans for what you'll do to improve the draft.

"First, take the checklist on argument writing that you already know well—the one from last year—and make absolutely sure this draft illustrates everything that is in that checklist. I want to remind you that you need to become your own coach, and like the best coaches of basketball teams, you need to be sticklers with yourself. You need to be super tough. If you do something that is on the checklist but only do it once or twice, will you check it off and say, 'I'm done!'? No way.

"So watch how I reread a part of my draft for just one item on the seventh-grade checklist—and remind yourself of how to read with high standards. I'm going to reread looking for how I explained my evidence—on the checklist it says 'I related textual evidence back to my argument and made it clear how it strengthens my claim.' I'm checking in on a part of my essay I haven't shared with you yet. It comes later on in my draft."

I pulled out the checklist, and scanned my draft, settling on this paragraph:

> Margot is also hurting others because of her own pain. Margot wants to go home even though it costs thousands of dollars. That's a lot of money. The narrator says "it would mean the loss of thousands of dollars to her family." This shows that Margot is not thinking how much money it would cost to go home.

I paused, frowned, and said, "Okay, I'm not sure how well I did this evidence work here. I'm using evidence from the text. So I do have the textual evidence, like the checklist suggests. But did I relate it back to my argument and show how it strengthens my claim? Let's see, I do say 'This shows,' so I'm kind of trying to explain why I picked that evidence. But something isn't really working. My claim is that when you can't get over your pain you hurt people. But now I'm talking about the money her family might lose . . . it's all about the money and I never really explained why or how that relates to pain or hurting people."

Argument Writing Checklist

	Grade 7	NOT YET	STARTING TO	YES!
	Structure			
Overall	I laid out a well-supported argument and made it clear that this argument is part of a bigger conversation about a topic/text. I acknowledged positions on the topic or text that might disagree with my own position, but I still showed why my position makes sense.	☐	☐	☐
Lead	I interested the reader in my argument and helped them to understand the backstory behind it. I gave the backstory in a way that got the reader ready to see my point.	☐	☐	☐
	I made it clear to readers what my piece will argue and forecasted the parts of my argument.	☐	☐	☐
Transitions	I used transitions to link the parts of my argument. The transitions help the reader follow from part to part and make it clear when I am stating a claim or counterclaim, giving a reason, or offering or analyzing evidence. These transitions include terms such as *as the text states, this means, another reason, some people may say, but, nevertheless,* and *on the other hand.*	☐	☐	☐
Ending	In my conclusion, I reinforced and built on the main point(s) in a way that makes the entire text a cohesive whole. The conclusion may reiterate how the support for my claim outweighed the counterclaim(s), restate the main points, respond to them, or highlight their significance.	☐	☐	☐
Organization	The parts of my piece are arranged purposefully to suit my purpose and to lead readers from one claim or counterclaim, reason, or piece of evidence to another.	☐	☐	☐
	I used topic sentences, transitions, and formatting (where appropriate) to clarify the structure of the piece and to highlight my main points.	☐	☐	☐
	Development			
Elaboration	I included varied kinds of evidence such as facts, quotations, examples, and definitions. I analyzed or explained the reasons and evidence, showing how they fit with my claim(s) and build my argument.	☐	☐	☐
	I consistently incorporated and cited trustworthy sources.	☐	☐	☐
	I wrote about another possible position or positions—a different claim or claims about this subject—and explained why the evidence for my position outweighed the counterclaim(s).	☐	☐	☐
	I worked to make my argument compelling as well as understandable. I brought out why it mattered and why the audience should care about it.	☐	☐	☐

Model the courage it takes to decide that a part of your essay is not working, and demonstrate how you come to that decision.

"So, writers, I could fix this up. I could think about all I know about explaining evidence, making it clearly fit with the claim, and try to make that quote fit better. But . . . as I say this, I'm thinking that if I'm really, truly being tough on myself, really truly reading with high standards . . ." As I trailed off, looking thoughtfully at that part of the essay, I took a thick marker and drew a slash through the entire paragraph.

"Writers—if I'm really trying to make this the best it can be, I have to be willing to ask myself the tough question—does this part still work?—and reflect on the thinking, not just the writing style, before I will be able to fix the confusion. I just don't think that paragraph works—it's evidence, sure, but not the most important evidence to go with my claim, which is why I was having trouble explaining things."

This is a moment for your theatrical flair to emerge—you want your students to be almost gasping when you cut this paragraph. You want your students to remember that revision isn't mostly about small, fiddly changes, and you want them inspired to be bold in their own revisions. So grasp the thickest marker you can find, take a dramatic pause, and slash through that paragraph with gusto!

ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

Set students up to be open to the possibility that their essays could use major revision.

"Your turn. Your challenge is to be willing to look for places where you might make some significant revisions, where your thinking might need to change. Try looking over your draft, and find a place where you might ask yourself some questions—Does my original writing work? Is there anything here that is confusing? Point to that spot when you've found it."

Not all students will point to their most troublesome spot right now, and that is alright. Don't wait for this to happen. Simply having students ask the question of their essay is enough for right now—the most important work will come when students have time to think through this independently.

This lesson is not about forcing students to find places that don't work in their writing. Some students may in fact have very sound arguments. But it is a lesson in thinking critically about their writing, and being able to explain their ideas as well as why they are or are not working. We know that even the strongest writers have places in their writing that could be improved, but it can sometimes be a challenge for students to embrace that idea.

Encourage students to start some revision work right away.

"Alright, you've all got a spot to start with. You could start like I did, looking at one item on the checklist to get your thinking started. Start this work, right here, right now, so you can get a feel for what you need to do today."

As students looked to their drafts, I whispered in—and occasionally voiced over—some coaching to help them. For some students, I reminded them, "Look at the checklist!" Others needed a nudge to get started, or the suggestion "Try looking at a different section of your draft."

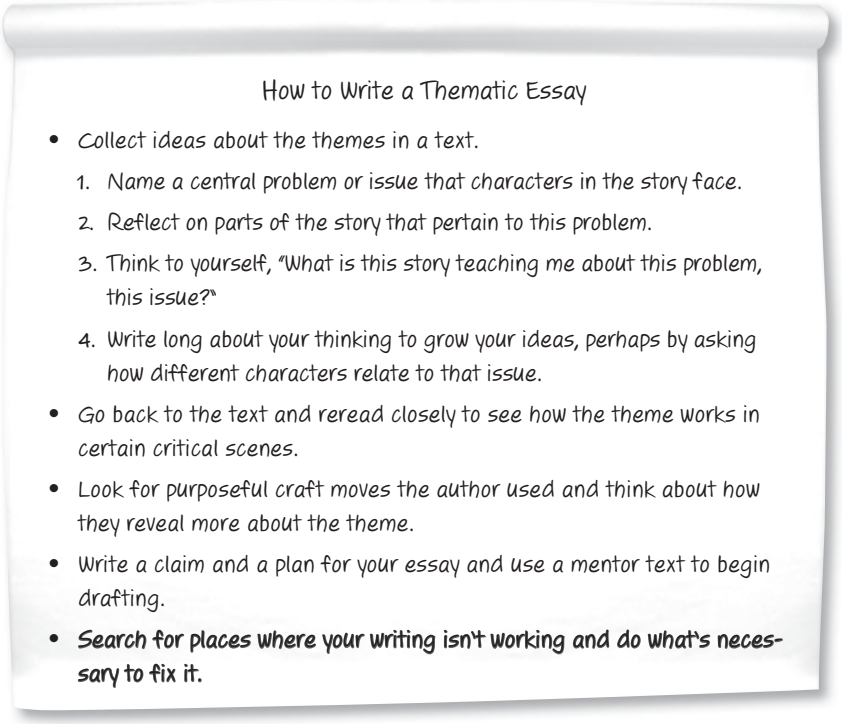
After a few minutes, I stopped the class. "I want to share out something I saw Winnie doing—this is another big, bold revision move that I know you've learned to think about before. I saw her draw a circle around a whole paragraph and then an arrow—she was moving the order of her sections because she realized that she had started writing a bit out of order."

It often pays off to help kids remember the concrete ways they've learned to revise. For instance, students can physically cut and reorder sections, or tape additions onto their pages. They can also use symbols like arrows or numbers to do larger-scale revisions without physically cutting. This is why we suggest that students draft on only one side of a sheet of paper—it makes much of this work easier.

LINK

Lead students to think about how they can use this new thinking in their work.

"Some of you probably now know you have some spots in your draft that could use some rethinking. Some of you, I know, have holes in your draft that you've avoided writing because it wasn't coming easily—and maybe the problem isn't the writing, but the idea itself. Others of you have things on your agenda today to revise that need to come first, but I do want you to keep this thinking in mind as you're working. Right now, jot down how, specifically, this thinking will affect your work today. Don't forget to use our chart to help you!"



How to Write a Thematic Essay

- Collect ideas about the themes in a text.
  1. Name a central problem or issue that characters in the story face.
  2. Reflect on parts of the story that pertain to this problem.
  3. Think to yourself, "What is this story teaching me about this problem, this issue?"
  4. Write long about your thinking to grow your ideas, perhaps by asking how different characters relate to that issue.
- Go back to the text and reread closely to see how the theme works in certain critical scenes.
- Look for purposeful craft moves the author used and think about how they reveal more about the theme.
- Write a claim and a plan for your essay and use a mentor text to begin drafting.
- **Search for places where your writing isn't working and do what's necessary to fix it.**

"Okay, you have some big jobs to do today. You've got this—go for it!"

Using Conferences to Help Students Reach Their Goals

AS YOUR STUDENTS GET TO WORK, rereading and revising their essays, and before you begin conferring, you will probably want to take two or three minutes to rally their energy and to do some over-the-shoulder research. Rally your writers by talking up the courage and strength it takes to tackle large-scale revisions. As you move among students, say things like, "Today's the day that separates the men from the boys, the pros from the amateurs. Any true pro knows that the heart of writing is rewriting." Notice students annotating their drafts and say, "I love the way you are tackling this with such intensity—your spirit, your power, is so clear just in the way you are approaching this!" Say, "I can see, just the way you are looking between your checklist and your draft that you are a taskmaster to yourself."

By doing this sort of rallying, you give writers time to get started so that you can also do some over-the-shoulder research. You'll be researching not only your students' willingness and strategies for rereading and revision, but also their drafts themselves. You need to identify what the biggest problems are with those drafts so you can address them. You may decide that the use of quotes is a problem—in which case, by conferring with a writer or two on that, you give yourself the chance to develop pre- and post-examples you can later use as teaching material in small groups or in a mid-workshop teaching.

Because I noticed Joy's draft bursting with voice and rambling on a bit (and this was a problem others had as well), I sat beside her as I do whenever I confer—at eye level, acting more like a colleague at a writer's side than a red-pen teacher from above—and asked, "As you reread, what are you noticing and thinking?"

I asked this, not the more generic, "How's it going?" because always, research that is informed by knowledge will be more intense and intimate.

Joy answered, "Well, I feel like I've worked on my introduction a lot but I'm really not sure what to do with the essay now. I like what I have . . . but it all feels kind of long, and maybe rambling, especially in the beginning!"

Although I could see immediately how her assessment matched her piece, I wanted to see what she saw, so I asked, "Show me what you mean." That is a typical move

MID-WORKSHOP TEACHING **Using Peers as Inspiration**

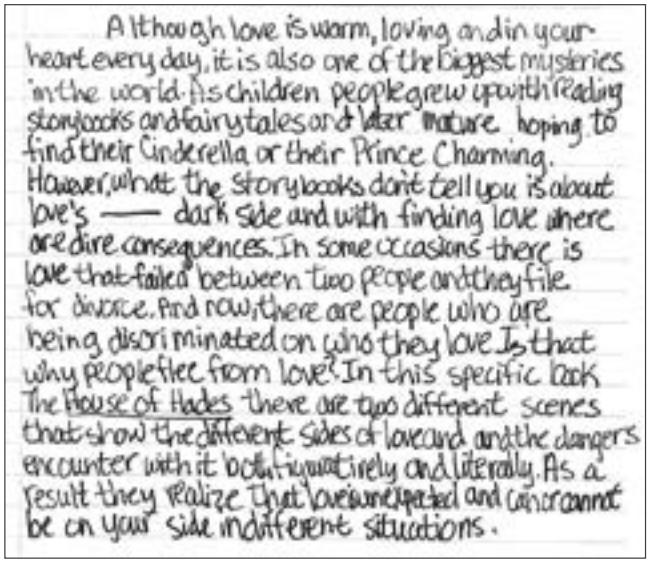
"Writers, let me stop you for a moment. Something that often helps me when I'm revising is to draw some inspiration from other writers. One kind of inspiration, of course, is a mentor text. But you also have possible inspirations all around you—your peers. So let's use a few minutes to do a super-fast mini-gallery walk. Find a part of your draft that you revised and are really happy with—maybe one you worked on and changed a lot so far today. Mark it with a Post-it® and put it out on your desk."

I gave students just a moment to find and mark a spot, before continuing. "Okay, you have only two minutes to look around your group at the marked spots, to see what kind of inspiration you can draw. Go!" With time ticking away, students hurried to check out what their classmates had done. I held the time to two minutes, which let each student read the marked page of one or two peers.

"Okay, back to work—See? Everyone is working hard today, not just you—bring the energy and inspiration you just got from your friends to your own work!"

Whether people like it or not, love has been around since the dawn of time. Love is warm, loving and is with you everyday. Love is also one of the biggest mysteries in the world and many people embrace love with open arms, ready to find their match. Many people grew up with fairy tales in their minds like a child like the princess finally finding her prince charming and they maturate, hoping to find love like in the stories. However, love can have a dark side and with finding love, it leads to some consequences. Doubts stumble up in you like a fizzy drink waiting to burst- is this person meant to be? Many people feel like the connection between partners have fizzled out and as a result have filed for divorce. And now, there are people who are being discriminated by who they love. Is that why people flee love? In this specific book, The House of Hades, there are two different scenes that show the different sides of love. But why does love have different sides? And why does love play such an important role in this book and life? In the book, The House of Hades, the people there encounter with love both figuratively and literally. As a result, they realize that love is unexpected and can or cannot be on your side in different situations.

At the beginning of this book, we catch up with the two main characters Percy and Annabeth who finds themselves in Tartarus- the prison, where monsters live and "form." Poseon as they step one foot in this place, they are faced with blistering air, a feel of pain as they walk and an urge to give up. On one particular part of the journey into Tartarus, they encounter the River of Lamentation, made out of pure misery. Just as they reach the river, "The water erupted in a



Although love is warm, loving and in your heart every day, it is also one of the biggest mysteries in the world. As children people grew up with reading storybooks and fairy tales and later mature, hoping to find their Cinderella or their Prince Charming. However, what the storybooks don't tell you is about love's —— dark side and with finding love where are dire consequences. In some occasions there is love that failed between two people and they file for divorce. And now, there are people who are being discriminated on who they love. Is that why people flee from love? In this specific book The House of Hades there are two different scenes that show the different sides of love and and the dangers encounter with it both figuratively and literally. As a result they realize That love is unexpected and can or cannot be on your side in different situations.

FIG. 5–1 Joy's piece before and after revision

for me in most of my conferences—asking students to assess, then saying, "Can you show me?"

Joy pointed to the first paragraph in her draft and we read it over together. She was right to notice that it seemed to be swamped with voice and elaboration, one line after another, becoming a bit of a ramble.

Of course, my mind leaped to solutions, but I'm schooled enough in conferring to know that taking the time to really research the writer's strategies, intentions, and values matters a lot. So I pressed. "Alright Joy, what have you tried to do to work on this paragraph?"

"Well, I tried cutting some lines, but every one I tried to cut, I thought, no, this one fits my thesis—why should I cut it? There's just so much I want to say!" Joy threw up her hands in playful but real frustration.

I smiled. "Joy, lots of writers resist cutting their own words—killing their darlings, they call it—so it is impressive to me that you resist cutting a lot of your intro. That shows

such a respect for your writing and your voice. And I like that even with the voice in your introduction, you still follow the rules—you introduce the topic, the text, and your claim in the first paragraph, but you do it with such spirit.

"But Joy, the same thing that makes you thoughtful about whether to cut lines is why readers will want to read your essay. You *are* thoughtful, and part of being thoughtful is being sure to include only the best, to not waste our readers' time, to be sure we get right to the heart of things as we write. You can still keep your voice *and* show how much you are thinking about your readers."

My goal in that part of the conference was to do what I always try to do—to help Joy feel seen, understood, and to give her feedback that would be memorable to her, that would matter. I went on to help her see how she might choose which lines to cut from her introduction.

"So, Joy, one way you can decide what lines to cut in your writing is to look for repetition. And I don't mean purposeful, thoughtfully crafted repetition. I mean the rambling type. Sometimes when my writing starts to ramble, it's because I am saying the same thing over and over again. I do this because I keep thinking of better ways to say what I mean. But if I am being thoughtful, I can just choose which way is the strongest and cut the rest. Does that help you at all?"

Joy paused, thinking. "Well . . . in this part here I guess I say a lot of the same thing."

I nodded. "So why don't you write-in-the-air, talk out how it might sound if you cut those lines?"

Joy practiced her new introduction, and I nodded, saying "Wow, that sounds way clearer! And it still has your wonderful voice!" when Joy had finished.

Of course, if you have students who do not have direct quotes in their drafts yet, you will want to address this as well. You might need to research a bit about why they're lacking quotes—because it's very unlikely that they don't know that quotes are needed. They may have been drafting without their texts open in front of them or without using the notebook work they did before drafting, they may be having trouble deciding on appropriate evidence to use, or they may see quotes as an "add-on" task they do during revision, rather than an integral part of the essay. In any case, you will want to coach students to do this work without spending time reteaching the fact that textual evidence is needed.

After a conference like the one I had with Joy, or a small group with some writers who aren't using quotes much at all, you'll have an invaluable resource—before-and-after writing that you can use in small groups with other writers tackling the same challenge. You might look for other kids whose drafts are swamped with quotes, and pull them together to teach them about the smart work that Joy did in solving that very same problem.

SHARE

Looking Back to Go Forward

Help students to see and celebrate how far they've come since the unit began.

"I have to say, you all have worked really hard on these essays and I am impressed. On days like this, it's often helpful to look back and notice how far you've come. Right now, look back in your notebooks to the very beginning of this unit, when you first started thinking about themes in your stories, then started to study the evidence, and so on. Try to find places where you look back now and think to yourself, 'Wow, I'm *so* much better at this than I was!'

"Now write one of those realizations down. It might sound like 'I used to . . . but now I . . .' or 'I used to . . . but I learned how to . . . by . . .' Go ahead."

Students began writing about what they noticed. I crouched beside various students, focusing on supporting what they were observing and coaching them to name even more specifically the areas of growth they found.

Channel students to set goals for homework that build on strengths rather than weaknesses.

"You are celebrating what you accomplished, but another important thing you just did was to remind yourself of what you have been working toward and what you, specifically, are really good at. Tomorrow you'll be focusing on a pretty sophisticated strategy for revision to help you make this essay phenomenal."

SESSION 5 HOMEWORK

BUILDING ON STRENGTHS

"Tonight, you're going to make sure to do three things. First, revise your essays. Take the checklist you've been using with you—that can be a great resource to help you decide what to work on. Second, spend some time trying to get even better at the parts you've done well already. For example, Kevin noticed that he used to always plop quotes into his paragraphs without really explaining them very well, but now he has gotten better at analyzing the evidence he uses. So maybe tonight he'll go through the rest of his essay and look for other opportunities to do that well. Third, annotate some parts of your writing to point out the strength you named with your partner. Talk with your partner about what you need to do tonight for homework."

Session 6

Clarifying Relationships between Evidence and Ideas

IN THIS SESSION, you'll teach students that essayists can use logic, specifically logical sentence frames, to help them clarify the relationship between their evidence and their ideas.

GETTING READY

- ✔ An excerpt from your own draft where your logic and explanation is not clear (see Teaching and Active Engagement)
- ✔ Chart paper and marker (see Teaching and Active Engagement)
- ✔ "Some Ways to Clarify Our Logic" sentence frames chart (see Teaching and Active Engagement)
- ✔ Students' writer's notebooks (see Link)
- ✔ "How to Write a Thematic Essay" anchor chart (see Share)

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS: W.8.1.b,c; W.8.5, W.8.9.a, RL.8.1, RL.8.2, RL.8.3, RL.8.4, SL.8.1, SL.8.3, SL.8.6, L.8.1, L.8.2, L.8.3, L.8.6

THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS expect that by the end of eighth-grade, students will write argumentative pieces that support their claims with logical reasoning, and that adolescent writers will be able to clarify the relationships between their evidence and their ideas in writing. In this session, you'll dive right into a discussion of what it means to be logical. You will ask your students to find places in their writing in which they might use more logical reasoning to explain the relationship between their ideas and the evidence that supports those ideas. Then you will offer them some sentence frames they could adopt that could scaffold their progress toward thinking and writing more logically.

This session and the next focus on revision, teaching students to build a strong logical bent to their analysis and to consider and refute alternative arguments. Assuming your school has followed the arc of these units, your students have worked in these areas before. When writing research-based argument essays last year, students worked to "bring their readers along" logically, going step by step to lay their thinking down, and they studied logical fallacies. If you are not familiar with this work, you might want to check in with a colleague so that you know the instruction you can lean on and perhaps reteach.

In this session, you'll use your students' prior teaching as a foundation upon which to begin a discussion of logical structure and thought. You will introduce the concept of a syllogism to your class—a sense of "If a, and b, then c," and you will help your class to look for places in their writing where they may not have made their logical thinking clear, or where they may not have been clear in their own minds. Then, you will lean on some structured sentence frames to support their venturing out into these logical lands. These frames will hold dual purpose—first they will help your students to discover places where their logic has slipped, and then they will support the revision work that may need to be done to make their analysis as logical as possible.

This session is the kiddie pool of logical discussions. While you will introduce a simple syllogism—this session does not pretend to cover the bases of what it means to be logical. It is a simple nod, for our students so that they may feel bold enough to step through the door.

MINILESSON

Clarifying Relationships between Evidence and Ideas

CONNECTION

Set students up to share and check in on their homework.

"Before we dive into some new work, turn to your partner and quickly show off what you did last night for homework. Make sure you tell your partner exactly what you worked on, and show them specifically what you did to your draft to make it better."

Tell a story of a time that misunderstandings arose from a lack of explanation or clarity.

"So, I was talking to my niece the other day, who is about your age. She was very upset. It turns out that one of her good friends told her he was in love with her. I know. Now, she loves this friend, but not like that, not romantically. It was confusing to her because she looked back now on all of the scenes in their friendship wondering—did I lead him on? Now—I told her I happened to know a room full of experts on this subject, so I'm wondering, can you take a second and discuss quickly—why does this misunderstanding happen so often, where one person thinks there is a romance when the other just sees friendship? Turn and talk."

I moved about the room listening, and then gathered the class. "I wish my niece were here to take part in this discussion—I think she would be both challenged and comforted by what you think. A bunch of you said that a lot of times, it's easy to misinterpret these things. That it's a hard situation to sort out, because in a new friendship you never pause in the middle of a great conversation and say, 'Hey, by the way I don't like you like that. I just like you as a friend.' That would be super weird to do every time you are having a nice time with a friend.

"But when you are writing essays—you knew this was coming back to writing—this is exactly what you need to do. You need to be sure and clarify or explain each piece of evidence from the text so that your reader doesn't get the wrong idea and become hopelessly confused as they read your essays. When revising literary essays, you need to be the kind of person who is always looking out for the possibility of misunderstandings—the kind of writer who is always explaining and clarifying the relationships you are creating between your evidence and your ideas."

◆ COACHING

Using personal anecdotes, especially those that your students can relate to, will help draw them into your teaching. Think of your minilesson connection as analogous to your essay introduction. How will you draw your reader into your writing? How will you help them connect to the important information you are about to share with them? When crafting your connection, you can ask yourself those same questions.

Name the teaching point.

"So what I want to teach you today is that when essayists revise their essays, they pause every time that they have introduced some evidence from the text, pushing themselves to explain exactly what that evidence means, and how it relates to the ideas they are discussing. They can make sure they do this well by using a little logic."

TEACHING AND ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

Explain the very basics of logical thinking, and then channel students to search for what might be missing in your writing.

"So to help you be this kind of writer, I want to give you a quick lesson in logic, because this might help you find places in your essays that need a little clarifying. At its most basic, logic is about drawing a conclusion that no one can really argue against. Here is a classic example of a logical argument":

1. All humans die.
2. Socrates is a human.
3. Therefore, Socrates will die.

"It's simple, in a way. It's almost like you add two ideas together to make a third idea. But logic gets really sloppy sometimes, especially in matters of the heart. Take my niece and her friend. You can see his attempted logic":

1. She is really nice to me.
2. I like her.
3. Therefore, she likes me.

"But do you see how this doesn't actually work? The first two ideas do not actually add up to the third. We all know that just because someone is nice to you doesn't mean they like you romantically. Today, you are going to be on the lookout for places where you make a lot of assumptions, and where what you mean is not clear or what people would call *logical*.

"Let's see how we can use logic to help make our essays stronger. Here is one part of my essay on 'All Summer in Day.' It's a revision to that paragraph I crossed out a few days ago. I have been working on it since then, but still think it's not as strong as it could be. I'm going to read it and I want you to give it the logic test. First, ask yourselves what I'm trying to argue. Then, look to see if I made that connection clear." I read a body paragraph I had written earlier, where I made sure to not explain myself clearly:

> Because Margot is so caught up in her own pain, she hurts others. Margot is even partly to blame for the jealousy the children feel. For example, she does not look at them or talk to them during recess. She actually refuses to speak to another kid when he talks to her. And she won't

Notice that today your teaching and your active engagement will be more of a waltz, where you will teach a little, and then your students will try a little, and then you will teach a little, and so on. This structure works for this lesson because if I were to demonstrate all of the work of this lesson, there would be far too much of me standing at the front of the room talking. By alternating bits of teaching with bits of student interaction, I allow myself the chance to teach a sophisticated lesson without losing my students.

I keep returning to this problematic paragraph for two reasons—first, I want to model how much work writers do on one little part of their writing. Secondly, this paragraph can be my slop drawer—full of mistakes and issues—so that the rest of my mentor essay can be emulatable—something my students can learn from. Imagine if my entire mentor essay was full of problems! Not much of a mentor then!

play any of their games. "If they tagged her and ran, she stood blinking after them and did not follow. When the class sang songs about happiness and life and games her lips barely moved." She is really unfriendly here.

"Okay—can you take a moment and help me out—give this the logic test. Start by asking yourself what are the ideas that I need to provide evidence for? It seems like what I am saying is that the children are jealous of Margot, and it is Margot who is partly to blame for this. So one question is, did I choose evidence that can be seen to show that Margot is to blame for the children's jealousy? And the second question is, did I actually spell out the way that the evidence does show that logically? That is, did I use language to spell out the way that the evidence makes that point? If I didn't do this, where is it that I dropped the ball (or you could say, that my logic fell apart)?"

The class began talking. Some students pointed out that I hadn't explained at all how Margot is to blame. Myah said that I didn't make the link between the fact that she is unfriendly and her responsibility for the children's jealousy. I gathered the class together and retold what I had heard.

If your students struggle to find places that need more clarification, you could voice over a few common places to look. Have students look for any time you use a quote or evidence from the text, as this is a place to check if there is enough explanation. At the end of a body paragraph is another good place to check out the logic.

Use sentence frames to help the logic become clear in your essay, and rally your class to help you decide where the gaps in your writing are.

"Okay, so I know what it is that I am missing—I see that I did not explain myself logically or clearly. So now I still need to do the work of actually explaining myself. Of course I can just start writing if I think I know how to clarify my thinking, but if I get stuck I can also try out some sentence frames—fill-in-the-blank templates—that will kind of force my brain to do the work I need to do. Here are a couple of frames you could use today that match with what you might be trying to do."

Some Ways to Clarify Our Logic	
"_____ is _____, because _____." "If _____ means that _____, then _____ is _____." "_____ and _____. Therefore, _____."	• (Someone who tells you the truth) ***is*** (a good friend) ***because*** (a part of friendship is being honest even when it is difficult). • ***If*** (being deceptive) **means that** (you don't tell someone the truth but then go behind their back), ***then*** (she) ***is*** (deceptive because she says she will keep a secret but then tells the world). • (Being a good cat owner takes responsibility) ***and*** (I was a good cat owner). ***Therefore***, (I am responsible).

"Let me try one of these out on my body paragraph. So instead of saying, 'She is really unfriendly here,' maybe I'll try that third frame:

'____ and _____. Therefore ____.'

"So in this section what I say causes Margot to be partly to blame for the kids' jealousy is, well, that she keeps herself apart from the other children. That's what my evidence says. So I have to ask myself—does it logically make sense to

say 'Margot keeps to herself **and** does not interact with the other children. **Therefore** she is partly to blame for their jealousy'? What do you think? Let's have a vote. Talk with your partner for a moment about how you will vote—either yes for this makes total sense, it is totally logical. Or no, there is something off here, it's not logical yet." The class began to talk. After only a few seconds I gathered them back together. "Okay, so who says that yes this makes total sense and is totally logical?"

A few hands went up. "Okay, and how many of you think it is missing something—that it is not quite logical yet?" Most of the class raised their hands. "Okay, so those of you who think this is logical, can you share why?" Flynn shot his hand in the air. "I think it's logical. Because it says that Margot sets herself apart and makes the other kids feel weird around her. So she is partly to blame because she is the one who doesn't get along with anyone."

"Okay, and someone who does not think it is logical yet, can you share why you think it is not logical?"

Myah hesitantly raised her hand. "Okay, well I guess because what you said—the part about her setting herself apart—doesn't really connect to the idea of jealousy. Like, maybe if you were trying to show that she made them mad or made them think she was odd. But you are trying to show her part in the jealousy thing. And I don't see how saying she set herself apart shows that she caused the kids to be jealous of her."

I asked the class to vote again. This time every hand went up for the "it's not logical" side. Even Flynn's. He shrugged, saying, "I missed that the whole thing was about jealousy. Myah's right."

Show how by revising with this work in mind, you make your thinking more logical.

"So we have decided my thinking is not logical quite yet. I am going to need to add a little more evidence or a little more thinking to be sure that I am being crystal clear in my thinking and my logic. For example, I could add some more evidence that shows how Margot contributes to the other kids being jealous, like that she keeps talking about the sun—something the other kids have never seen. Let me see if putting this thinking into my sentence frame helps me do a better job clarifying what I think logically. Okay, now I could write: 'Margot keeps herself apart from the other children **and** she keeps talking about the sun—something the other children have never seen. **Therefore,** she is partly to blame for their jealousy, because she almost flaunts what they want most in their face, while never getting to know them.' What do you think?" The class nodded.

"Yes, I think this is better. So now I am going to need to go back to my original paragraph and be sure I set this up—I've mentioned evidence in this line that isn't in my original paragraph. If I rewrite, it could sound something like this . . ." I showed my original paragraph, quickly revising it out loud:

> Because Margot is so caught up in her own pain, she hurts others. Margot is even partly to blame for the jealousy the children feel. For example, Margot keeps mentioning her experience with the sun in front of the other children. She writes poems about the sun, she keeps telling stories of what it feels like. Also, Margot does not look at the other children or talk to them during recess. She actually refuses to speak to another kid when he talks to her. And she won't

It's often a drag on your lesson's pacing to invite students' comments in the minilesson—it slows down the work and only a few students need to be engaged. However, in this case, I decided that the time spent on voting, hearing two sides, and voting again was well worth it. The voting kept students engaged in seeing whether "their" side would win the vote, and asking for a student response from each side made it likelier that the student speaking would have a strong point to make.

play any of their games. "If they tagged her and ran, she stood blinking after them and did not follow." When the class sang songs about happiness and life and games her lips barely moved. "Margot keeps herself apart from the other children **and** she keeps talking about the sun–something the other children have never seen. **Therefore,** she is partly to blame for their jealousy, because she almost flaunts what they want most in their face, while never getting to know them."

Debrief the steps you took to clarify your ideas.

"You see what we did to my piece? First we looked for the places where it felt like I hadn't clarified my thinking—places where my logic slipped. Then we used sentence frames to work on clarifying how my evidence supports the thinking of that section. Finally we went back to see if there was anything I needed to add or revise in that section now that we had clarified my thinking."

LINK

Show students the connection between today's lesson and their ongoing work.

"Writers, today you were able to carefully analyze the logic of my writing and figure out when it needed some improvement. The challenge now is to apply this same critical eye to your own writing. This is work you might set out to do today, in this essay, but it's also something you should be keeping an eye on in all the other essays you'll write this year and for the rest of your life."

Help students make a smart plan for their writing today.

"What I want to push you to do today is to work in a smart way on your writing. You are revising your essays, but you might want to focus on more than just today's lesson. There is the previous session's work, the work you did with the checklist, and everything else you know about revising essays. Take a moment and jot down in your notebook what your work will be—making a little To-Do list for yourself for both class time and homework tonight."

It always helps to keep an eye on how you're framing the links of your minilessons. The content of today's lesson, like many others, is one you'd probably love your students to take up wholeheartedly—and it can feel prudent to insist that students do the work you teach each day, on the day you teach it. But beware of making the lifelong work of clarifying their thinking seem like a day's assignment. Notice how this link works to help students prioritize their work here.

Looking for Logical Fallacies

LAST YEAR, your students spent time learning about logical fallacies that can plague argument writing. You may find that this work will be useful today, as well, and it would be helpful for you to reference the seventh-grade *The Art of Argument* unit as a reference. You might have some students who would benefit from studying how to apply this work to their literary essays. Look for students whose writing contains logical fallacies—in literary essay writing, you might particularly notice students falling into the logical traps of false analogies (William, in "All Summer in a Day" treats Margot cruelly, the way a vicious lion hunts his prey through the jungle), correlation, not causation (William was looking out the window with the other children, and then he leads the kids to lock her in the closet. Clearly, what he saw when looking out the window encouraged William to lock her up), or straw man (William believes that anyone different is totally evil and deserves punishment, which is wrong). To do this work, you might pull a small group of these writers together and briefly remind them of their prior work with logical fallacies by asking them to describe what's wrong with the logic in a few examples. Like your students' seventh-grade teachers may have done, you could provide index cards containing some examples of literary essay writing with logical fallacies—the examples listed earlier in this paragraph would work. Let students discuss which fallacies are represented in the examples you provide, probably with the support of a list of some of the logical fallacies they studied in seventh grade.

Then you might invite your group to reread their own work, looking for those fallacies that they may have used in their own writing and revising to avoid them. Your role in the small group at this point, as in most small groups you conduct, will shift to a coaching role, moving rapidly from student to student offering encouragement and prompts to help them solve the specific problems they are working out.

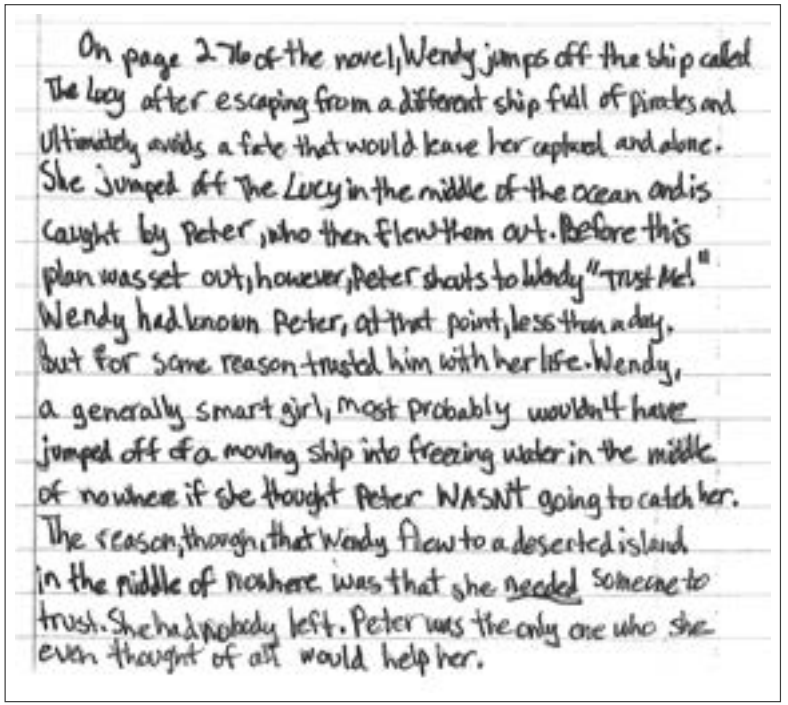
After working with this group, you might survey the room, and your previous observations of student work, to target your small groups and conferences to fit your students'

MID-WORKSHOP TEACHING **Defining Your Terms**

"Writers, can I stop all of you? Right now, will you look back at your claim and circle the one to three key terms in your claim. For example, Rob is writing about *The Hunger Games*, and his theme is, When trust is broken, relationships start to collapse. His key words might be *trust* and *collapse*. Right now, will you figure out your key words?" A few seconds later I said, "One of the unusual things about literary essays is that the authors often take the time to do something called 'define your terms.' Now the key words in your claims, like in Rob's claim, aren't words that people really need to look up in a glossary, but here's the thing. Different people mean different things by those terms. Trust means something different to one person and another. So it is often helpful to write, in your essay, 'By trust, I mean the feeling of safety, that the person you trust is not going to hurt you on purpose.'

"Glen reminded me of this work. He was trying to explain how a scene from his story fits with the idea of—yes—trust. So he took a line in his essay and just said straight out what he defines the word *trust* to mean. He wrote, 'Trust means knowing that someone has your back.' Once he said that, it was so easy to go on and explain his idea. He wrote, 'If trust means knowing someone has your back, then in the world of the Hunger Games there is no such thing as trust, because everyone is trying to survive and play the game.'

"Defining the terms he was using really helped Glen to explain how a scene was an example of that term or idea. You might, if you are having trouble being really clear in your writing, try defining your terms a bit and see if that helps."



On page 276 of the novel, Wendy jumps off the ship called The Lucy after escaping from a different ship full of pirates and ultimately avoids a fate that would leave her captured and alone. She jumped off the Lucy in the middle of the ocean and is caught by Peter, who then flew them out. Before this plan was set out, however, Peter shouts to Wendy "Trust Me!" Wendy had known Peter, at that point, less than a day. But for some reason trusted him with her life. Wendy, a generally smart girl, most probably wouldn't have jumped off of a moving ship into freezing water in the middle of nowhere if she thought Peter WASN'T going to catch her. The reason, though, that Wendy flew to a deserted island in the middle of nowhere was that she needed someone to trust. She had nobody left. Peter was the only one who she even thought of at all would help her.

FIG. 6–1 Hannah explores the logic of Wendy's leap off the ship in *Peter and the Sword of Mercy*.

needs. You may see some of your students not trying at all, frozen in place, not able to begin. Many of these students will be kids who have not had many essay-writing units in the past, or who have struggled with essay writing all along. Logical explanations will not be within their grasp just yet, nor will it be what they need, and you will have to offer them a different way to explain and clarify their evidence and to show how it relates back to their ideas. For these students you can draw upon past teaching in these units, which they either have not received or have not internalized. Sixth- and seventh-graders will be accustomed to "unpacking evidence" by writing "this shows that . . ." or "this reveals . . . ," and those lessons can still be relevant to eighth-graders as well.

You will want to celebrate effort today. Some students will reach for logical thinking in their essays but will still write with logic that wobbles. Certainly you could push that young person further, but it may be more fruitful to give a high-five and ask the writer to keep working. Consider a young pitcher in a youth league, learning the elusive and sophisticated curveball. The first time this young pitcher attempts a curveball, a good coach will not show disapproval and announce that the young player didn't yet get it. Instead, the coach is apt to say, "Good try. Try it again. This time you may want to try positioning your fingers like this . . ." Teaching students to clarify logically is very much like teaching them to throw a curveball—it is difficult to explain, and they will only make progress with lots of practice and small bits of coaching. In this light, you might find yourself offering tips like:

> "Can the 'Clarifying Logic' chart help you?"
>
> "Sometimes it helps to read the whole section, then step back and study the logic—don't get caught up in just one sentence."
>
> "In the next section when you try this, try quickly annotating in the margins what your logic is, what the flow is. Then write."

Celebrate your students' progress, and encourage your students to keep at it. While perhaps ultimately your deepest wish is for your students to be thinking in syllogisms, any student who makes palpable progress toward thinking more logically has taken an important step.

SHARE

Using Partners Effectively

Point out that being a good partner means coming with questions ready.

"You know, I realized during the last session that being a good writing partner goes two ways—yes, when someone is asking for your help with their writing you should work really hard to help them, but I realized that when you give your writing to someone, it really helps if you have a sense of what you want their help with. Otherwise you are kind of just shoving your piece in front of their face saying, 'Help me.'

"Instead, a good writing partner will come to their partnership with a few questions or trouble spots. Maybe you will say, 'I am wondering about this section, it doesn't seem clear,' or maybe you will say something like, 'I am not sure if my evidence feels strong—can you check for that?' You can always use our chart to help you come up with a question. I have added today's strategy.

"It may be that your writing partner catches lots more that they can help you with, but when you lead with a sense of what you are worried about, you help your writing partner focus—which is good for everyone."

Channel students to write down three questions they might have about their essays that a writing partner might help with. Then have them work together, using those questions as a starting point.

"So right now could you think about how your essay is going, and could each of you come up with a few questions that could kick off your partner work today? Once you have your questions, choose someone to go first, and get started."

Set up students for their homework tonight—to get as close to a finished draft as they can.

"So tonight might be a big push for you—I am hoping you all will come in the day after tomorrow with a finished draft—a good revised essay. What I expect as always is that tomorrow you show me evidence that you worked hard on your writing for homework. So go ahead now and write your To-Do list down—what you think you can accomplish by tomorrow."

How to Write a Thematic Essay

- Collect ideas about the themes in a text.
  1. Name a central problem or issue that characters in the story face.
  2. Reflect on parts of the story that pertain to this problem.
  3. Think to yourself, "What is this story teaching me about this problem, this issue?"
  4. Write long about your thinking to grow your ideas, perhaps by asking how different characters relate to that issue.
- Go back to the text and reread closely to see how the theme works in certain critical scenes.
- Look for purposeful craft moves the author used and think about how they reveal more about the theme.
- Write a claim and a plan for your essay and use a mentor text to begin drafting.
- Search for places where your writing isn't working and do what's necessary to fix it.
- **Logically explain how your evidence supports your thinking about the text.**

CLOSING IN ON A FINISHED DRAFT

"In just a few days you'll have a chance to edit and then celebrate the work you've done with these essays. What do you need to do tonight to set yourself up for this? Do you need to clarify your logic? Have you used transitions to help explain your thinking and help your reader understand when you are shifting from one line of thinking to another? Perhaps you'll take another look at the Argument Writing Checklist, and use that as a guide of sorts, to make your writing stronger. We will talk in the morning about how it went."

Argument Writing Checklist

	Grade 7	NOT YET	STARTING TO	YES!
	Structure			
Overall	I laid out a well-supported argument and made it clear that this argument is part of a bigger conversation about a topic/text. I acknowledged positions on the topic or text that might disagree with my own position, but I still showed why my position makes sense.	☐	☐	☐
Lead	I interested the reader in my argument and helped them to understand the backstory behind it. I gave the backstory in a way that got the reader ready to see my point.	☐	☐	☐
	I made it clear to readers what my piece will argue and forecasted the parts of my argument.	☐	☐	☐
Transitions	I used transitions to link the parts of my argument. The transitions help the reader follow from part to part and make it clear when I am stating a claim or counterclaim, giving a reason, or offering or analyzing evidence. These transitions include terms such as *as the text states, this means, another reason, some people may say, but, nevertheless,* and *on the other hand.*	☐	☐	☐
Ending	In my conclusion, I reinforced and built on the main point(s) in a way that makes the entire text a cohesive whole. The conclusion may reiterate how the support for my claim outweighed the counterclaim(s), restate the main points, respond to them, or highlight their significance.	☐	☐	☐
Organization	The parts of my piece are arranged purposefully to suit my purpose and to lead readers from one claim or counterclaim, reason, or piece of evidence to another.	☐	☐	☐
	I used topic sentences, transitions, and formatting (where appropriate) to clarify the structure of the piece and to highlight my main points.	☐	☐	☐
	Development			
Elaboration	I included varied kinds of evidence such as facts, quotations, examples, and definitions. I analyzed or explained the reasons and evidence, showing how they fit with my claim(s) and build my argument.	☐	☐	☐
	I consistently incorporated and cited trustworthy sources.	☐	☐	☐
	I wrote about another possible position or positions—a different claim or claims about this subject—and explained why the evidence for my position outweighed the counterclaim(s).	☐	☐	☐
	I worked to make my argument compelling as well as understandable. I brought out why it mattered and why the audience should care about it.	☐	☐	☐

Session 7

Counterargument within Literary Essays

IN THIS SESSION, you'll teach students that essayists look for places where there could be another interpretation or opinion about the text, and they write to try and argue why their interpretation is the best one, by nodding to the alternative argument and then explaining why that one is not as sound.

GETTING READY

- ✔ An excerpt from the teacher model essay (see Teaching)
- ✔ Chart paper and markers (see Teaching)
- ✔ Students' essay drafts (see Active Engagement)
- ✔ Texts students are using to write their essays (see Active Engagement)
- ✔ "How to Write a Thematic Essay" anchor chart (see Link)

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS: W.8.1.a,c; W.8.5, W.8.9.a, RL.8.1, RL.8.2, RL.8.3, RL.8.4, SL.8.1, SL.8.3, SL.8.4, L.8.1, L.8.2, L.8.3

IT ONLY TAKES A COUPLE OF MINUTES watching the pundits on a variety of news programs to see that these days, we are not listening to each other very closely. All too often the representatives of two sides of an issue instead talk *at* each other, making their argument without much consideration of the points—valid or otherwise—that their opponent asserts. It is, of course, challenging to listen to those that have different ideas from ours. It is natural to want to ignore those other viewpoints, to hold on tight to our original thinking. In this session, you'll remind your students to take on this challenge in their literary essays, teaching them to always be on the lookout for alternative claims and ideas.

The Common Core Standards ask us to teach our middle school students, when arguing a point, to consider the alternative arguments and to incorporate these counterpoints into their writing. As our students are asked to write more and more essays, to debate ideas in their classes, and to grapple with complex ideas, they will need to be able to reflect upon and deal with those who think differently from them. This work goes beyond simply stating that other ideas exist; it is larger in scope than adding a part to your essay that says, "Some people think . . . but I think . . ." This work asks students to also weigh and evaluate those counterpoints, and to argue within their essays how their thinking is sounder than that of their potential opponents. Your students began this work already, of course, when they wrote research-based argument essays in seventh grade, reading mentor texts to study how essayists distinguish and qualify counterclaims from their own. Here you will continue this work, teaching your class how to argue that their interpretations of a text are truly the best, the soundest, the most complete interpretation around.

Of course, in literary essays, the idea of a counterargument is a little different than in, say, a persuasive piece. It will be the rare literary essay that argues a claim so debatable that someone could out and out say, "No, you are wrong. That is *not* a theme in that text." Still, in any text there are moments and ideas that have alternate interpretations—not opposition as much as other possibilities. One writer argues that a character is brave, and someone else argues that while the character is indeed brave, the more accurate trait to

describe him or her would be generous and bold. One writer puts forth a theme, and argues not just that their theme is valid, but how it may be more significant, more text based, than an alternate theme in the text.

"You will teach your class how to argue that their interpretations of a text are truly the best, the soundest, the most complete interpretations around."

In this session you'll teach students, as they continue revising their thematic essays, to look for places in their writing where there could be an alternative interpretation of a scene or theme. You will teach your class that in these moments it is the job of the literary essayist to bring up those other possibilities, arguing as they do why their interpretation is the better one while also acknowledging the strength of the alternative. To do this you will offer your students a few thought prompts to help them through the tricky waters of evaluating counterarguments, and you will push them to use their partnerships to help them see whether they have done the job.

MINILESSON

Counterargument within Literary Essays

CONNECTION

Share a story of a debate you had with a colleague about the class text.

"I had the most interesting lunch period yesterday! There I was, just eating my sandwich with Ms. Maier, talking about 'All Summer in a Day.' You know how teachers are—we just can't stop talking about reading and writing." I winked. "Anyway, I was talking about the ending and how the children all feel guilty about what they did to Margot, and Ms. Maier was all like, 'I don't think they feel guilty at all!' I was kind of shocked because it seemed so obvious to me that they *do* feel guilty. We got into a bit of an argument about it, and I realized that instead of me just saying, 'But I'm right!' I had to do more work proving it. That debate got me thinking—what else might I need, to do a better job of supporting my interpretation? What else in my essay might someone disagree with?"

Name the teaching point.

"So today I am going to teach you that essay writers look for places in their essays where there could be another interpretation or opinion about the text, and they write to argue why their interpretation is the best one. They do this by nodding to the alternative argument and then explaining why that interpretation is not as good as their own."

TEACHING

Model how you look for places in your essay where there might be an alternate argument or idea.

"I am going to read a part of my essay, and as I do I am going to think to myself—could there be another way of seeing this? Could someone debate me here? To do that I will pay attention to the ideas I'm asserting, and I will also pay attention to my word choice when describing the themes or characters, thinking about whether someone else might have another idea, or might use another word. After I figure out what that counterargument would be, it'll be important for me to refute that argument in my writing. But let's get started by finding a place in my essay where someone might have an alternate interpretation. So here is one of my body paragraphs." I read the bit aloud:

> By the middle of the story the reader begins to see that the children, in their painful jealousy, hurt Margot with words and with force. First they mock her poetry and her memories, claiming she never did see the sun. Then they shove her. Finally, they lock her in a closet so she won't

◆ COACHING

see the sun. The text even describes the children's hatred toward Margot more explicitly when Bradbury writes, "They hated her pale snow face, her thinness, and her possible future." The other children have never seen the sun, but dream of it every night. The children are jealous that Margot has ever seen the sun and Margot is grieving the loss of it. This shows that everyone in this story is hurting in their own way–Margot because she has lost the sun and the children who have never seen it.

"Okay, so I am stopping here and thinking—could someone debate me on any point I made? Is there an idea that someone might take issue with, a way that I describe the theme or the characters? Hmm . . . I guess someone could maybe say that the children are not jealous? That's an idea that people might disagree with. But no, that doesn't really make sense. I don't think someone would say the kids *aren't* jealous . . . Hmm . . . but maybe someone would say that this short story is not *mostly* about how jealous they are. Someone may be able to argue that this story is really about the children's meanness. I don't agree, but I guess someone could say that really this story is more about how mean the kids are, not how jealous they are."

Part of your work in modeling for your students is acting. You want your kids bursting at the seams to jump in and help you figure out your writing "problem" because that means they are intellectually with you each step of the way. This means your kids have to believe that you are really thinking aloud, even if you've planned ahead meticulously and taught the lesson five times already that day.

Offer students thought prompts to help them to speak back to the alternative argument, and model how to do that work in your essay.

"So once I have found a spot where there could be a little debate, it's my job to argue why I am right, or more right, than someone who might debate me. I can use a few thought prompts to help me find the way, prompts like these." I hastily sketched out a few thought prompts on chart paper.

Prompts To Argue Counterpoints in Literary Essays

"While some might argue . . . they forget that in the text it says . . ."

"Some people might interpret this to mean. . . . But clearly . . . because . . ."

"Certainly it could be said . . . While this is a good point . . . it fails to account for . . ."

If you are concerned about time, or your ability to write quickly yet still legibly in front of your class, feel free to create a chart ahead of time, listing out the counterargument prompts. In cases like these, it's not crucial that your students see you write. It just depends on how "off the cuff" you'd like to seem with your creation of the prompts.

"Let me see how these thought prompts might help me. I am going to write-in-the-air how I might address someone who is debating me on this idea—someone who thinks that the children are not as jealous as they are mean. I am going to use a thought prompt to help me. I think I'll try that last one. Okay, so I could write, 'Certainly it could be said that the children are more mean than they are jealous. While this is a good point, because the children are definitely mean, it fails to account for . . .' Hmm. Well, I need to think a little bit here about what is missing or wrong in this opposing idea. I've just said that it's a good point—my essay wouldn't be very good if I just left it at that!

"I think . . . well . . . I think what people are missing if they focus on how mean the children are is that their pain, which comes from their jealousy, is what causes them to be mean. I think this is a better idea than just saying 'they are mean,' so I am going to finish my sentence . . . 'while this is a good point, it fails to account for how much pain the children are in. They are not born mean; their pain—their jealousy—has made them mean.'

"I am looking at my body paragraph now and I think this really helps me sound like I have thought of everything—even what people who have other ideas may say!"

Debrief the steps you took.

"So to make sure you are addressing any alternative arguments, you can do what I did: look for places in your essay where someone might have a different interpretation of the text, then use a thought prompt to help argue back, tightening your essay by being sure to explain why your interpretation is best and what any alternative ideas are missing."

ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

Channel students to address alternative arguments in their own essays.

"Make sure you are sitting with someone who is writing about the same text." I waited while the class reconfigured. "Okay, so now each of you pick a spot in your essay—a paragraph or section—that you think maybe someone could see differently. Do that now, and point to it so I know you are ready." I waited again. A few students were taking a longer time to select a section and I said, "For now, just pick a paragraph to practice on, and later you can decide if it's the best one.

"So to practice this we are going to use the partnerships in our room. Instead of imagining what someone might say about your text, you are going to see what someone actually says. Hand your essay to your partner, making sure they know which section to look at. Now, when you read your partner's section your job is to be looking for other possible ideas and arguments—other interpretations—of the text. Just like I looked at the ideas and word choice in a part of my essay, thinking what could someone say differently, you are going to do that for your partner. Try it now . . ."

Students began to read, and conversations began around the room. Some students seemed to struggle and I went to them first, coaching by saying, "Remember you can always be on the lookout for a way they describe the themes or characters, that you think would be an alternate fit, like I did with 'jealous' and 'mean.'"

With this coaching Shirley said tentatively to Chris, "You said that the theme is about making the choice to trust people but someone else could say that it is more about like . . . I don't know . . . how to forgive people maybe."

Direct writers to practice addressing alternative arguments by using thought prompts.

"So writers, now with your partners, try explaining why your thinking is better than the alternative—and if you need to, use one of these thought prompts on the chart."

Kiara and Danielle were working together, brows furrowed. "While some might argue . . . um, that Tess is a hero by following her heart, they forget that in the text . . ." Kiara looked up, confused. I coached, "Danielle, it's your job to try and help your partner if she's stuck. What do you think?"

Danielle said, "Uh . . . maybe she could say 'They forget that in the text even Tess realizes that she was wrong to reject her family completely.'"

Gathering the class, I said, "I just want to point out that Danielle really helped Kiara when she was stuck—today when you are working, don't be afraid to ask for help from someone who knows your text."

LINK

Make sure your writers have a plan for how to keep working on their essays.

"So today's lesson is great revision work, but of course you know many ways to revise and should use all you know to make your essays better. Take a second and think through how your work might go today and give me a thumbs up when you have decided and are ready to work. Remember to check our chart to help you—I've added today's lesson."

How to Write a Thematic Essay

- Collect ideas about the themes in a text.
  1. Name a central problem or issue that characters in the story face.
  2. Reflect on parts of the story that pertain to this problem.
  3. Think to yourself, "What is this story teaching me about this problem, this issue?"
  4. Write long about your thinking to grow your ideas, perhaps by asking how different characters relate to that issue.
- Go back to the text and reread closely to see how the theme works in certain critical scenes.
- Look for purposeful craft moves the author used and think about how they reveal more about the theme.
- Write a claim and a plan for your essay and use a mentor text to begin drafting.
- Search for places where your writing isn't working and do what's necessary to fix it.
- Logically explain how your evidence supports your thinking about the text.
- **Add writing that addresses alternative ideas to yours, being sure to show how your thinking is better.**

Pushing students to be better partners to each other is powerful work. Knowing how to find and use a writing partner—and conversely, knowing how to be *that writing partner for someone else—is a skill that will live within your students for years to come.*

As thumbs went up I sent writers back to their desks. "If you aren't sure how to begin, you should stay here in the meeting area and we can get you started." A few kids stayed with me, and I coached them to consider their choices as the rest of the class got to work.

This strategy of asking students to stay in the meeting area if they are having trouble not just starts your workshop off with a targeted and helpful small group, but also encourages your students to take more ownership over their learning. They have to assess whether they need a certain kind of help and take action to get it. Do keep an eye out for those students who indiscriminately take you up on this opportunity—see if they are more eager to get support or more eager to avoid getting to work.

Supporting Strong Writers

ONE WAY you can strengthen your conferring is by occasionally taking on a lens for yourself as you study your class, so that you can focus your attention on one group of students, or one concern. One lens you might adopt is looking at the needs of your strongest writers. Today, some teaching that could support these students could include the following teaching points:

- Some of your students may benefit from revising whole sections to thread counterargument throughout the piece, rather than isolating this in one or two places. In seventh grade, your students learned to do this in their argument essays. You could build on this work by teaching students to think more fully through the alternative arguments, so that they can counter the big idea, as well as the specific evidence. You might coach students to sketch out a quick plan for their imagined "alternative" essay, then look for the multiple places where their own actual essay presents a better interpretation.
- Some students might profit from studying others' literary essays to see how counterarguments can look in this type of writing. You might decide to use a revised part of your demonstration essay; however, some of your most sophisticated writers could benefit from studying how writers in venues like the *New York Times Book Review* structure their arguments and address possible alternative views. Your students will find that counterargument is a powerful move, and one that literary writers can put to good use in many ways. Some examples can be found at: http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2010/12/26/the-dark-side-of-young-adult-fiction/pure-escapism-for-young-adult-readers (Google search term "New York Times Pure Escapism for Young Adult Readers") http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/04/books/review/legend-by-marie-lu-book-review.html (Google search term "New York Times Legend Marie Lu").

  This might be a small-group inquiry—you could start the conversation, providing students with a mentor essay and inviting them to talk and record their observations on a large piece of paper or a shared document online, and then

MID-WORKSHOP TEACHING

When the Alternative Arguments Are Better Than Yours

"Writers, let me pause you for just a moment. I have got to share what Rachel just did as a writer today. She was working on finding the alternative ideas and addressing them in her essay, when all of a sudden she realized that the alternative was actually better than her original! Right, Rachel?"

Rachel nodded. "It was awful."

I laughed. "Yeah, it's not ideal, especially when you are pretty far along in your drafts. But this is really common; all essay writers face it eventually, realizing in the middle of their essays that their whole claim is off. Rachel, can you report on how you decided to face this crisis?"

Rachel sighed dramatically. "Well, you gave me the choice to try and cover my tracks—not really mentioning the alternative that much, which felt wimpy but easy, or rewriting a bunch of my essay, which felt right but horrible."

"Okay, so before you tell us what you decided, class, will you vote with me? What do you think Rachel should do? The easy way or the right way? How many think the easy way?" A bunch of hands shot up. Laughter filled the room. I said, "Hey, it's a viable option. Okay, how about the right way?" More hands waved in the air. I asked Rachel what she decided to do. She shook her head and groaned.

"Argh! The right way!" Her declaration was met with cheers. I quieted the class and said, "You all may find yourself in this situation as you imagine alternative arguments and interpretations. When you do, you will have to make this same choice."

let your students take the lead in making discoveries. After some discussion, encourage students to look back at their own essay draft and try out some of the new moves they learned.

- You might help students strengthen their response to alternative interpretations by teaching them to seek out and closely analyze direct quotes from the text that seem to strongly support their interpretation over the alternative. You could show how phrases like "While many might think . . . they are forgetting the line . . ." can set up this evidence, and coach students to try out this work in the small group.
- In the previous session, and in seventh grade, students got a taste of logical thinking as a way to strengthen their arguments. You may also have decided to address logical fallacies with a small group in the last session. Today, many of your more advanced writers could benefit from learning how to deploy logical thinking to counter alternative interpretations. Rather than only analyzing the logic of their own arguments, coach students to flesh out the alternative argument, then look for weaknesses in the logic to rebut it. You could use the example from your minilesson, about the kids' meanness, and say something like, "An alternative interpretation is that the kids are less jealous than they are mean, maybe because William does so many mean things, that it seems to show that he's just that type of person, a cruel character, not just acting out of jealousy. But the logic seems to fail a little bit—*if* William is a cruel individual, if this is a trait of his, then he should still be mean at the end. Instead he appears to be reflective, looking down at the ground and letting Margot out of the closet. Therefore, William is not a mean individual, but instead his meanness seems to be motivated by an outside factor, such as the jealousy he feels toward Margot."

Similarly to the last session, this work may be challenging for many of your students. Because of this, a big part of your job during independent writing time today will be to encourage your students to take risks, and to congratulate them for doing so, even if what they produce misses the mark of perfection. As students work, give them the impression that you are proud of them for trying, that the point of their work as writers is sometimes to take a leap of faith and see what happens. After all, this unit is a safe space for your class to try on new moves—in fact, this last year of middle school may be one of the last times they have a teacher who will work with them on the *process* of writing, not just the product. While it is challenging for the best of us to encourage students to try things we are unsure they will be successful with, it is so important that we do so now—so that our writers can find out and push their limits and abilities before they head off to high school. To reach great heights, our students will need us to be their cheerleaders.

As an eighth-grade teacher this identity of cheerleader may come easily—if so, good for you. But this may not be your natural state of being when surrounded by thirty-five thirteen-year-olds. You may believe that being strict and demanding is the best way to be as a teacher of adolescents, or you may use your sarcasm and humor as a way to bond and engage your students. Whatever your natural state, however, you will want to find the cheerleader's voice that feels authentic to you. Our students need praise; they need to know we are proud of their efforts, especially when they are struggling. Without this support, many students will just stop working, or worse, they will believe that this work is not for them. They need us to cheer them on. They need to know we believe in them.

This does not mean that you need to be bright-eyed and bushy-tailed. Many are the classrooms where a demanding teacher is still able to communicate how deeply he loves his students. For him, a simple nod fills his students with pride. What it does mean is that from time to time it will be important for you to take stock of your relationship with your students, particularly when they are working independently, asking yourself if they see you as their cheerleader, their champion, or if they feel more like you are the disapproving judge, tsk-tsking their abilities and shaking your head at their progress.

While every day it is essential that your students see you as their ally, it is all the more important on days like today, when you will be pushing them out of their comfort zones, and asking them to take risks as writers, thinkers, and students. Let them see your metaphorical pom-poms today. Let them know how proud you are of them.

SHARE

Using Partners to Check Your Work

Channel partnerships to help each other be sure they have addressed the alternative argument fully.

"Writers, most of you have had a chance to try out some alternative arguments in your drafts today, and you've all had a chance during the lesson to try out this kind of thinking. So let's kick it up a notch. One of the hardest parts of doing this kind of work is to really understand the alternative argument, to really get what that argument is saying, and to then argue back directly. For example, say you have been dying for a pet, and you approach your mom to have the discussion. She says no, sorry, you are just not responsible enough. You argue back to her: 'I know you think I'm not responsible enough for a pet but I have saved up a lot of money to get this gerbil.' That counterargument, that you have saved up enough money to get the gerbil, doesn't rebut her point, that you are not responsible enough to take care of a pet. A better argument might be to give examples that demonstrate your responsibility, such as caring for your neighbor's cat when they went on vacation over the holidays.

"So right now, will you point out to your partner a place where you addressed an alternative argument—and partners, could you make sure that the writer has addressed the heart of the alternative argument? One way to do that is to make sure that the writer focuses on the ways the alternative idea isn't as good as their own. In other words—you can check to make sure that they don't go on any tangents."

As the class worked I listened into a few partnerships. Glenn was saying to Lucas, "You said the other idea would be that the story is about how everyone deserves justice but then you didn't say why that's not as good an idea." I piped in, "Oh so you are saying that Lucas needs to think about what might be missing in that alternative idea and name it?" Glenn nodded.

Other people would say you sucseed in life not because you try hard because you have luck. But, with those people I dont agree. I believe that If you try hard enough you will sucseed. I found an example to prove my statment. Inthe novel Harry is afraid to go and fight Malfoy in the middle of the night. He tries hard to face his fears. He beleives in himself. That wasnt about luck, it was about Harry being brave and facing his fears.

FIG. 7–1 Stav's alternative argument about the nature of success

REVISING YOUR DRAFT

"For homework tonight, you'll want to finish revising your draft. That means you need to plan out really purposefully what needs to happen tonight—what do you need to take home with you? How much time do you need? I could see some of you needing some time to thread today's and the previous lessons through the rest of your essay. Others of you might need to be sure you have quotes embedded in your essays, while still some of you might really need to read your essay from the beginning, looking for gaps or places you need to revise. Take a moment now to think about your plan and write it down. You'll have some time, first thing tomorrow, to show your partner what you accomplished. But above all else, please make sure you come to school with a revised essay."

Session 8

Editing Using All You Know

Dear Teachers,

From time to time we'll write a letter to you with some suggestions for the day rather than writing out in detail what we've done. We hope this will give you a welcome opportunity to get your own curriculum-writing feet beneath you. When you do design your own minilesson, with just some scaffolding from us, you'll be able to especially tailor it to your students.

In this session, you'll set up students to effectively edit their work before putting on their final stamp of approval. To prepare for today's session, you'll want to have read their writing with an eye on who needs what when it comes to conventions—and to make sure that in your whole-class lesson, you are teaching toward a *majority* need. (You can of course pull small groups of students during independent writing time to address any minority needs.) You may have done this as the unit was progressing, or before the unit even began. Some teachers choose to collect students' drafts, looking them over and sorting for small groups. Others choose to assess as the students write, looking over their shoulders and recording the needs they see.

MINILESSON

You might begin today's lesson by asking students to talk quickly with their partner about everything they know how to do when it comes time to edit. From there, you can point out that they are experienced at using both editing time and their writing partners to help them find and fix basic errors, like misspelled words and missing punctuation. You'll certainly want to tell them to keep doing that kind of work, while also encouraging them to up the ante by looking for ways to lift the level of their use of conventions. When you deliver your teaching point you might say, "Today I want to remind you that writers use all they know and all they have (relying on the resources at their disposal) to put the final touches on their drafts. But I also want to teach you that when writers edit, they don't

Common Core State Standards: W.8.1, W.8.5, W.8.9a, RL.8.1, RL.8.2, RL.8.3, RL.8.4, RL.8.10, SL.8.1, L.8.1, L.8.2, L.8.3, L.8.6

SAMPLE BEND

simply fix a misspelled word or add a missing period. Instead, they continue to look for ways to outgrow themselves, this time by lifting the level of their conventions."

To demonstrate your teaching point, you might first show students how you were careful to fix errors in your writing. You could display an enlarged page from your writing that contains various corrections, quickly walking through the section with your class, pointing out the errors that you noticed, emphasizing for them that you found these edits by reading carefully. You'll want to note how you read carefully, maybe aloud, looking for errors and fixing them as you read. If you feel your class needs more demonstration, you could also display a section of your essay that has not been edited, and go through a bit of that text together, urging students to give you a thumbs up when they see a misspelled word, or a misuse of punctuation, or even a clumsily written sentence. Then you might sit back, arms folded across your chest and claim, "Great, I'm finished!" before shaking your head and saying something like, "You know, I think I'm letting myself off the hook too easily here. I think I can use tools I have—like the seventh-grade Argument Writing Checklist I have already used for my essay, and I could even look at the eighth-grade checklist now to push myself—to help me grow as a writer, by using conventions in more sophisticated ways."

From there, you might display the conventions section of the checklist alongside your enlarged, edited writing and notice that the checklist expects you to use punctuation to clarify and emphasize meaning. You might first think aloud about what that *really* means, perhaps mentioning that sometimes writers clarify what they mean by adding more to a sentence with an appositive, or by tucking in an aside within parentheses. Brainstorm a list of all the different types of punctuation you know, asking students to help by calling out what they know, too, as you record each mark on a one-day chart, along with a reason why writers might use it. You won't have time to truly teach students how to use every type of punctuation, but many will be familiar with the marks, and seeing them on the chart will be enough of a reminder to get some students to incorporate more of them into their pieces. And you will certainly want to show how you incorporate at least a couple into your writing.

You might take a sample of your mentor essay, like this excerpt from the one used in this unit:

Argument Writing Checklist

	Grade 7	NOT YET	STARTING TO	YES!	Grade 8	NOT YET	STARTING TO	YES!
	Structure				**Structure**			
Overall	I laid out a well-supported argument and made it clear that this argument is part of a bigger conversation about a topic/text. I acknowledged positions on the topic or text that might disagree with my own position, but I still showed why my position makes sense.	☐	☐	☐	I laid out an argument about a topic/text and made it clear why my particular argument is important and valid. I stayed fair to those who might disagree with me by describing how my position is one of several and making it clear where my position stands in relation to others.	☐	☐	☐
Lead	I interested the reader in my argument and helped them to understand the backstory behind it. I gave the backstory in a way that got the reader ready to see my point.	☐	☐	☐	After hooking the reader, I provided specific context for my own as well as another position(s), introduced my position, and oriented readers to the overall line of argument I planned to develop.	☐	☐	☐
	I made it clear to readers what my piece will argue and forecasted the parts of my argument.	☐	☐	☐				
Transitions	I used transitions to link the parts of my argument. The transitions help the reader follow from part to part and make it clear when I am stating a claim or counterclaim, giving a reason, or offering or analyzing evidence. These transitions include terms such as *as the text states, this means, another reason, some people may say, but, nevertheless,* and *on the other hand.*	☐	☐	☐	I used transitions to lead the reader across parts of the text and to help the reader note how parts of the text relate back to earlier parts. I used phrases such as *now some argue, while this may be true, it is also the case that, despite this, as stated earlier, taken as a whole, this is significant because, the evidence points to, and by doing so …*	☐	☐	☐
Ending	In my conclusion, I reinforced and built on the main point(s) in a way that makes the entire text a cohesive whole. The conclusion may reiterate how the support for my claim outweighed the counterclaim(s), restate the main points, respond to them, or highlight their significance.	☐	☐	☐	In the conclusion, I described the significance of my argument for stakeholders, or offered additional insights, implications, questions, or challenges.	☐	☐	☐

By the middle of the story the reader begins to see that the children, in their painful jealousy, hurt Margot with words and with force. First they mock her poetry and her memories, claiming she never did see the sun. Then they shove her. Finally, they lock her in a closet so she won't see the sun.

First you will want to name that you are already doing some nice things with your punctuation. For instance, your use of more complex sentences and interspersing short sentences gives your writing a variety of sentence structures that you will want to point out to your students who might use this text as a mentor for their own sentence variety. Then you might look for places in your writing where you could say a little more that might help clarify what you are saying, either by explaining things a bit further or giving a little more pertinent backstory. Once you have found a place, model how you choose what kinds of punctuation you will use and then revise your writing, perhaps to look a little more like this:

By the middle of the story the reader begins to see that the children, in their painful jealousy, hurt Margot with words and with force. First they mock her poetry and her memories, claiming she never did see the sun **(even though in their hearts, they know she did, and it is killing them with jealousy)**. Then they shove her. Finally, they lock her in a closet so she won't see the sun.

You'll likely invite students to help, though you'll probably want them to think silently at first as they watch you, so you can do the initial heavy lifting. You could show how you reread your writing, looking for where you might use parentheses to quietly tuck a little more information into one of your sentences to further convey meaning; or dashes to add information you want to spotlight; or a colon to add a *list* of information you want to spotlight. In addition to adding more information, you might need to rewrite sentences to effectively incorporate new punctuation, and you'll want to highlight this fact for students, so they aren't simply looking for places in their writing to plop in a semicolon. You'll want to emphasize for students that the end goal is not to use new punctuation for the sake of using new punctuation; rather, it is to use new punctuation for the sake of enhancing meaning.

The active engagement in this session is a good time for partners to begin the work of helping each other see errors in their writing. Have students switch essays with their partners, and while still with you in a meeting area, have them read aloud each other's first paragraph, discussing the misspellings and punctuation errors they see. This will be a chance for you to notice those students who shrug and say everything is fine when you know from your initial assessment that they need more support. You will confer with these students soon—for now, just notice who is able to see errors and who is not.

You might also use the active engagement to give students time to study their own pieces alongside the conventions section of the Argument Writing Checklist, looking for places where they, too, might incorporate new punctuation to clarify and emphasize meaning—and to strengthen their positions by sounding more knowledgeable. You'll want to circulate and coach students as they work. As you see individuals engaged and successful, you might one by one send them off to finish putting the final touches on their pieces at their seats.

As students settle into their independent writing, you might first work with those still in the meeting area and struggling with the day's lesson. Perhaps editing for basic conventions is the most pressing need for them, and rather than coaching them to vary their punctuation, you might remind them how to use an editing checklist to fix errors. You can coach them to reread their pieces several times, each time with a different lens. You might also ask them to identify what is particularly hard for them when it comes to using correct conventions (Do they struggle to identify misspelled words? Are they unsure when to use a comma?), so you can partner them up with a peer editor who can help them find and fix those kinds of mistakes.

You might go on to gather other students, showing them how, as they work to incorporate a variety of punctuation, they might also use mentor sentences to help them vary the length and complexity of their own sentences. To prepare for this work, you might gather three to four very different sentences (consider length, complexity, punctuation), write them on a piece of paper, and make photocopies to distribute to students in a small group. You might begin by picking one of the sentences to use as a mentor and together, first study the sentence and name its parts, then rewrite one of your sentences to mirror its structure. From there, you can coach each student as she or he tries similar work—first studying a sentence, then rewriting one of their own. Students may or may not choose to study every sentence on the handout when they return to their seats, but encourage them to rewrite at least a couple of their own sentences to make their writing more varied and sophisticated. You can also encourage them to look for and emulate mentor sentences on their own in the future (perhaps the next time they sit down to read), jotting in their notebook ones that strike them as particularly beautiful or interesting. Jeff Anderson's books *Everyday Editing* (2007) and *Mechanically Inclined* (2005) are great resources to support you in this work.

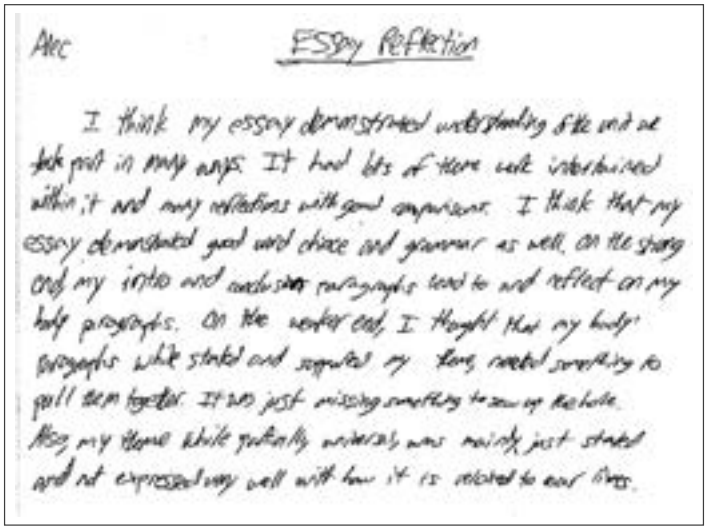
You might also use this time to rally and organize students who can effectively act as peer editors. Invite them to set up their own coaching table or corner of the room where their peers can come for particular help. Perhaps you prep one or two students to sit in one area and offer

Argument Writing Checklist

	Grade 7	NOT YET	STARTING TO	YES!	Grade 8	NOT YET	STARTING TO	YES!
	Structure				**Structure**			
Overall	I laid out a well-supported argument and made it clear that this argument is part of a bigger conversation about a topic/text. I acknowledged positions on the topic or text that might disagree with my own position, but I still showed why my position makes sense.	☐	☐	☐	I laid out an argument about a topic/text and made it clear why my particular argument is important and valid. I stayed fair to those who might disagree with me by describing how my position is one of several and making it clear where my position stands in relation to others.	☐	☐	☐
Lead	I interested the reader in my argument and helped them to understand the backstory behind it. I gave the backstory in a way that got the reader ready to see my point.	☐	☐	☐	After hooking the reader, I provided specific context for my own as well as another position(s), introduced my position, and oriented readers to the overall line of argument I planned to develop.	☐	☐	☐
	I made it clear to readers what my piece will argue and forecasted the parts of my argument.	☐	☐	☐				
Transitions	I used transitions to link the parts of my argument. The transitions help the reader follow from part to part and make it clear when I am stating a claim or counterclaim, giving a reason, or offering or analyzing evidence. These transitions include terms such as *as the text states, this means, another reason, some people may say, but, nevertheless,* and *on the other hand.*	☐	☐	☐	I used transitions to lead the reader across parts of the text and to help the reader note how parts of the text relate back to earlier parts. I used phrases such as *now some argue, while this may be true, it is also the case that, despite this, as stated earlier, taken as a whole, this is significant because, the evidence points to, and by doing so …*	☐	☐	☐
Ending	In my conclusion, I reinforced and built on the main point(s) in a way that makes the entire text a cohesive whole. The conclusion may reiterate how the support for my claim outweighed the counterclaim(s), restate the main points, respond to them, or highlight their significance.	☐	☐	☐	In the conclusion, I described the significance of my argument for stakeholders, or offered additional insights, implications, questions, or challenges.	☐	☐	☐

help with spelling; others to offer help with end punctuation; still others to offer help around punctuating quotations. You might then encourage certain students to visit a table or two based on their particular needs.

Today's mid-workshop teaching could be used to remind students that all authors have an editor that fixes lingering mistakes before the piece goes to publication. You can tell students you want to give them the opportunity to receive similar support. You might explain that peer editors have set up shop, each one offering assistance in a particular area, and then invite students to visit one or more tables as they deem necessary for themselves. Or you might instead invite students to work with their partners, giving one another's writing a thorough read whenever they feel ready for a second pair of eyes. Students could also use this time with their partner to focus on how they are lifting the level of their punctuation. Have them take a few moments to share their revisions, first reading aloud their initial sentence and then their revised version, making sure to read in a way that allows their partner to hear the punctuation changes. As they work, voice over, emphasizing for the class how the changes in punctuation both deepen the meaning as well as make the writers sound more knowledgeable and sophisticated, and hence, like more of an authority on the subject.


Alec

Essay Reflection

I think my essay demonstrated understanding of the unit as a whole part in many ways. It had lots of facts and information within it and many reflections with good comparisons. I think that my essay demonstrated good word choice and grammar as well. On the strong end my intro and conclusion paragraphs tend to and reflect on my body paragraphs. On the weaker end, I thought that my body paragraphs while stated and supported my topic needed something to pull them together. It was just missing something to tie up the whole thing my theme while gradually universal was mainly just stated and not expressed very well with how it is related to our lives.

FIG. 8–1 Alec reflects on his essay.

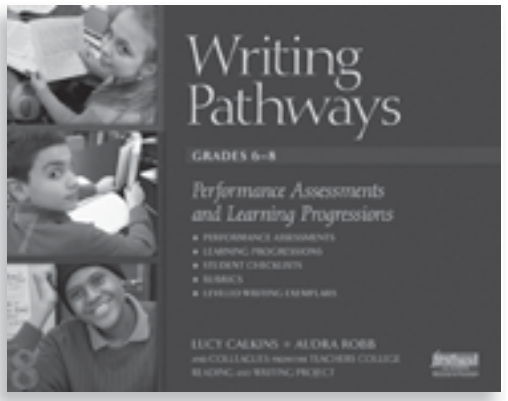
As you wrap up the bend, you'll probably want to give students the opportunity to reflect on the work they've done so far in the unit and to look ahead to their upcoming work. You can ask students to pull out their copies of the seventh- and eighth-grade Argument Writing Checklist and say, "As you look back on the things that you've accomplished with this one essay, this is a great chance to celebrate and notice the ways you've grown as an essayist. You'll want to keep those strengths in mind as you move to other essays."

Then push your class to look ahead by pointing out the eighth-grade checklist and its opportunities for goal-setting. You might say, "We've worked with the seventh-grade Argument Writing Checklist already in this unit, and I saw that a number of you were using the eighth-grade checklist, as well, to guide your editing today. Now that you have the seventh- and eighth-grade checklists side by side, you can use them to think ahead to the next part of this unit, when you'll be writing a new essay; you can set some goals for what you want to do, right from the starting gate. Maybe it will be something you're starting to do well and want to do better now, or perhaps it will be something on the checklists that you haven't yet tried."

You'll want to give students the chance to reflect. If there's time, you could continue, adding, "Will you spend a few minutes with your partner pointing out what you noticed and what goals you're setting? If you have set a goal to try something you haven't tried before, see if your partner has tried it—maybe he or she can be your coach as you embark on this new work."

Good luck!
Kate and Katy

Writing Pathways *Performance Assessments and Learning Progressions, Grades 6–8*



Writing Pathways is designed to help you provide your students with continuous assessment, feedback, and goal setting. Organized around a 6–8 continuum of learning progressions for argument, information, and narrative writing, this practical guide includes **benchmark student texts, writing checklists, learning progressions,** and **rubrics** that will help you evaluate your students' work and establish where students are in their writing development.

> ***"The assessment system that undergirds this curriculum is meant as an instructional tool. It makes progress in writing as transparent, concrete, and obtainable as possible and puts ownership for this progress into the hands of learners. This system of assessment demystifies the Common Core State Standards, allowing students and teachers to work toward a very clear image of what good work entails."***

A benchmark piece of writing for each writing genre shows how one piece of writing could develop according to the learning progressions established by the Common Core State Standards.

Improve it, Don't Ban It: A Position Paper on Football

The writer used different sentence structures to achieve different purposes throughout his/her argument.

The writer used shifting verb tenses when needed and appropriate.

The writer hooked the reader and then provided specific context for his/her own as well as other positions.

The writer stayed fair to those who might disagree with the position taken by describing how this position is one of several and making it clear where it stands in relation to others.

The writer laid out an argument on a topic and made it clear why this particular argument is important and valid.

It is a fall Friday night. The moon hangs low, the air is crisp. You are walking into our town. As soon as you enter the town, you see a warm glow from the edge of the high school and you hear a low wave of noise. Get a little closer. The glow becomes lights, bright and bold hanging over the field behind the high school. The wave of noise? If you walk toward the field, you'll hear that wave of noise separate and become hundreds of voices, all cheering and screaming their hearts out. For their team. For our team. For football.

For hundreds of years, American high schools have been hubs for communities to come together and hope and root for their teams on Friday nights. Football is a pastime as American as apple pie and fireworks. It brings communities together and once a year, on the night of the Super Bowl, it brings all of America together. Yet, recently in the media, football has come under attack for being a sport that is dangerous. Critics of football and even former team players have come forward to claim that football causes concussions and that its players suffer shorter life spans. And seeing that football may be damaging for adult players has trickled down to people now fearing what happens when children play. Even President Obama has weighed in on the dangers of football for youth (see Downes, 2013). Articles aimed at people of every age from adults to children have appeared in news outlets, all urging people to take a stand against football for youth and see that it is not worth the injuries it causes. Their point—a game that causes injury is not one we want for our children. Yet, this argument overlooks the positives around football. The negative media storm has been drowning out anyone who might say that football is fun or good. Reporters paint football players as modern day gladiators fighting thoughtlessly for the entertainment of the crowd. However, this is not the full story. Football is an important form of physical exercise, a game which offers many mental benefits and a community tradition which brings joy to many. This paper will argue that rather than seeing football as entirely negative, people should be finding ways to make football safer and improve the game so that it can continue to remain a key, enjoyable pastime.

There seems to be no end to the anecdotal and scientific evidence about the injuries football causes. In "The Problem with Football: How to Make it Safer" Sean Gregory (2010) begins by describing a high school player walking into a researcher's office to see the brains of dead football players and looking at how these brains are damaged. The effect of that anecdote is shocking. The reader clearly sees that injuries, particularly head injuries caused over time do have long-term consequences. Gregory states that high school players alone suffer 43,000 to 67,000 concussions a year (although this number could be higher since these are only the number of reported concussions). In 2013, five former Kansas City Chief players sued the Chiefs for not warning them about the long-term dangers of concussions and in August of that month, the NFL

The writer used techniques from other genres (in this case, narrative writing) to hook the reader and set the stage for the argument.

The writer intended to affect the reader in particular ways—to make the reader think, realize, or feel a particular way—and chose language to do that.

The writer used comparisons, analogies, vivid examples, and other rhetorical devices to clarify the writer's thinking and help readers grasp the meaning and significance of a point.

The writer introduced the position and oriented readers to the way in which the argument would unfold across the position paper.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Argument Writing Checklist

	Grade 8	NOT YET	STARTING TO	YES!
	Structure			
Overall	I laid out an argument about a topic/text and made it clear why my particular argument is important and valid. I stayed fair to those who might disagree with me by describing how my position is one of several and making it clear where my position stands in relation to others.	☐	☐	☐
Lead	After hooking the reader, I provided specific context for my own as well as another position(s), introduced my position, and oriented readers to the overall line of argument I planned to develop.	☐	☐	☐
Transitions	I used transitions to lead the reader across parts of the text and to help the reader note how parts of the text relate back to earlier parts. I used phrases such as *now some argue, while this may be true, it is also the case that, despite this, as stated earlier, taken as a whole, this is significant because, the evidence points to, and by doing so …*	☐	☐	☐
Ending	In the conclusion, I described the significance of my argument for stakeholders, or offered additional insights, implications, questions, or challenges.	☐	☐	☐
Organization	I organized claims, counterclaims, reasons, and evidence into sections and clarified how sections are connected.	☐	☐	☐
	I created an organizational structure that supports a reader's growing understanding across the whole of my argument, arranging the sections to build on each other in a logical, compelling fashion.	☐	☐	☐
	Development			
Elaboration	I brought out the aspects of the argument that were most significant to my audience and to my overall purpose(s).	☐	☐	☐
	I incorporated trustworthy and significant sources and explained if and when a source seemed problematic.	☐	☐	☐
	I analyzed the relevance of the reasons and evidence for my claims as well as for the counterclaim(s) and helped the reader understand what each position is saying. I made sure all of my analysis led my readers to follow my line of argument.	☐	☐	☐
Craft	I intended to affect my reader in particular ways—to make the reader think, realize, or feel a particular way—and I chose language to do that.	☐	☐	☐
	I consistently used comparisons, analogies, vivid examples, anecdotes, or other rhetorical devices to help readers follow my thinking and grasp the meaning and significance of a point or a piece of evidence.	☐	☐	☐
	I varied my tone to match the different purposes of different sections of my argument.	☐	☐	☐

Argument Writing Checklist (continued)

	Grade 8	NOT YET	STARTING TO	YES!
	Conventions			
Spelling	I spelled technical vocabulary and literary vocabulary accurately. I spelled materials in citations according to sources, and spelled citations accurately.	☐	☐	☐
Punctuation and Sentence Structure	I used different sentence structures to achieve different purposes throughout my argument.	☐	☐	☐
	I used verb tenses that shift when needed, (as in when moving from a citation back to my own writing), deciding between active and passive voice where appropriate.	☐	☐	☐
	I used internal punctuation effectively, including the use of ellipses to accurately insert excerpts from sources.	☐	☐	☐

Crystal-clear checklists that spell out the genre-specific benchmarks students should be working toward help students set goals and self-assess their work.

Rubrics for each kind of writing establish clear learning benchmarks and help teachers monitor student progress throughout the stages of development.

	Grade 7 (2 POINTS)	2.5 PTS	Grade 8 (3 POINTS)	3.5 PTS	Grade 9/10 (4 POINTS)	SCORE
			STRUCTURE (cont.)			
Organization	The writer purposely arranged parts of her piece to suit her purpose and to lead readers from one claim, counterclaim, reason, or piece of evidence to another. The writer used topic sentences, transitions, and formatting (where appropriate) to clarify the structure of the piece and to highlight her main points.	Mid-Level	The writer organized claims, counterclaims, reasons, and evidence into sections and clarified how sections are connected. The writer created an organizational structure that supports a reader's growing understanding across the whole of his argument, arranging the sections to build on each other in a logical, compelling fashion.	Mid-Level	The writer has a purpose for how she chose to organize each part of her piece, what she chose to include or exclude, (including citations and acknowledgement of other views), and where she chose to include each detail in the piece.	
						TOTAL:
				Mid-Level	The writer supported each of his claims, stating the reasons clearly and supporting those reasons with cited evidence and convincing analysis. The writer evaluated his sources' reasoning, authenticity, and rhetoric. He explained when a source seemed problematic, such as when examples suggested as generalizable were actually specific. The writer included, ranked, and evaluated evidence from a variety of sources, including print and digital, and/or evidence gained from surveys, interviews, and/or experiments. The writer related evidence back to his claim, situated it contextually, and explained its relevance and significance. The content is persuasive for the audience. The writer acknowledged complexity, describing various sides, stances, and perspectives and elaborating on the strengths, assumptions and limitations of all positions, including his own. The writer contextualized his claim within these various perspectives.	(x2)

...ds expectations in Elaboration, then that student would receive 8 points instead of 4 points. If a student

...rgument, Information, and Narrative Writing (*first*hand: Portsmouth, NH).

Name: _____ Date: _____

Rubric for Argument Writing—Eighth Grade

	Grade 7 (2 POINTS)	2.5 PTS	Grade 8 (3 POINTS)	3.5 PTS	Grade 9/10 (4 POINTS)	SCORE
			STRUCTURE			
Overall	The writer laid out a well-supported argument and made it clear that this argument is part of a bigger conversation about a topic/text. He acknowledged positions on the topic or text that might disagree with his own position, but still showed why his position makes sense.	Mid-Level	The writer laid out an argument about a topic/text and made it clear why her particular argument is important and valid. She stayed fair to those who might disagree with her by describing how her position is one of several and making it clear where her position stands in relation to others.	Mid-Level	The writer not only presented different aspects of an argument, he also was fair to multiple positions, showing gaps or limitations of each, including his own. The writer built to a conclusion that shows his position within the topic and its significance. He stayed fair to those who might disagree with him by describing how his position is one of several.	
Lead	The writer interested readers in his argument and helped them to understand the backstory behind it. He gave the backstory in a way that got readers ready to see his point. The writer made it clear to readers what his piece would argue and forecasted the parts of his argument.	Mid-Level	After hooking her readers, the writer provided specific context for her own as well as another's position(s), introduced her position, and oriented readers to the overall line of argument she would develop.	Mid-Level	Not only did the writer make deliberate decisions about how to provide information in his introduction to get readers ready to follow his line of thinking, he also referred to the introduction later in order to heighten the effect of the argument as a whole. The introduction clearly laid out the line of argument, making it clear how the writer's position fits within sides of this issue.	
Transitions	The writer used transitions to link the parts of her argument. The transitions help readers follow from part to part and make it clear when she is stating a claim or counterclaim, giving a reason, offering or analyzing evidence. These transitions include terms such as *the text states, as, this means, another reason, some people may say, but, nevertheless,* and *on the other hand.*	Mid-Level	The writer used transitions to lead readers across parts of the text and to help them note how parts of the text relate back to earlier parts. He used phrases such as *now some argue, while this may be true, it is also the case that, despite this, as stated earlier, taken as a whole, this is significant because, the evidence points to,* and *by doing so,*).	Mid-Level	The writer's transitions connected examples to reasons and evidence, and help the reader follow her thinking. The writer also used transitions to make clear the relationship of these sources to each other and to her own claim (*in accordance with, in conjunction with, similar to, by contrast).*	
Ending	In his conclusion, the writer reinforced and built on the main point(s) in a way that made the entire text a cohesive whole. The conclusion reiterated how the support for his claim outweighed the counterclaim(s), restated the main points, responded to them, or highlighted their significance.	Mid-Level	In the conclusion, the writer described the significance of her argument for stakeholders or offered additional insights, implications, questions, or challenges.	Mid-Level	In the conclusion, the writer acknowledged the complexity of the argument and argued for the significance, impact, or potential of his claim.	

	Grade 7 (2 POINTS)	2.5 PTS	Grade 8 (3 POINTS)	3.5 PTS	Grade 9/10 (4 POINTS)	SCORE
DEVELOPMENT (cont.)						
Craft*	The writer used words purposefully to affect meaning and tone. The writer chose precise words and used metaphors, images or comparisons to explain what she means. The writer included domain-specific, technical vocabulary relevant to her argument and audience and defined these when appropriate. The writer used a formal tone, but varied it appropriately to engage the reader.	Mid-Level	The writer intended to affect his reader in particular ways—to make the reader think, realize or feel a particular way—and he chose language to do that. The writer consistently used comparisons, analogies, vivid examples, anecdotes, or other rhetorical devices to help readers follow his thinking and grasp the meaning and significance of a point or a piece of evidence. The writer varied his tone to match the different purposes of different sections of his argument.	Mid-Level	Not only did the writer use analogies, comparisons, symbolism and allusions to make her points and consider how word choice and the content of her piece will have an effect on the reader, the writer also considered how the way her piece reads will affect the reader. The writer uses words and syntax to make her work more powerful. The writer used words precisely, and/or figuratively, and/or symbolically, to strengthen a particular tone or meaning, The writer angled evidence and represented various perspectives to support and situated	(x2)
Spelling	The writer matched the spelling of tech vocabulary to that found in resources a text evidence. He spelled material in ci correctly.					

*Elaboration and Craft are double-weighted categories. Whatever score a student would get in th meets standards in Elaboration, then that student would receive 6 points instead of 3 points.

	Grade 7 (2 POINTS)	2.5 PTS	Grade 8 (3 POINTS)	3.5 PTS	Grade 9/10 (4 POINTS)	SCORE
LANGUAGE CONVENTIONS (cont.)						
Punctuation and Sentence Structure	The writer varied her sentence structure, sometimes using simple and sometimes using complex sentence structure. The writer used internal punctuation appropriately within sentences and when citing sources, including commas, dashes, parentheses, colons, and semicolons.	Mid-Level	The writer used different sentence structures to achieve different purposes throughout his argument. The writer used verb tenses that shift when needed, (as in when moving from a citation back to his own writing), deciding between active and passive voice where appropriate. The writer used internal punctuation effectively, including the use of ellipses to accurately insert excerpts from sources.	Mid-Level	The writer used punctuation to emphasize connections, strengthen tone, and clarify and add complexity to relationships and meanings.	TOTAL:
						TOTAL:

Teachers, we created these rubrics so you will have your own place to pull together scores of student work. You can use these assessments immediately after giving the on-demands and also for self-assessment and setting goals.

Scoring Guide

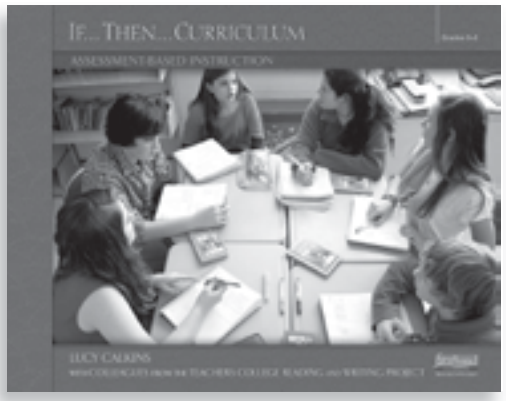
In each row, circle the descriptor in the column that matches the student work. Scores in the categories of Elaboration and Craft are worth double the point value (2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, or 8 instead of 1, 1.5, 2, 2.5, 3, 3.5, or 4).

Total the number of points and then track students' progress by seeing when the total points increase.

Total score: _____

If you want to translate this score into a grade, you can use the provided table to score each student on a scale of 0–4.

Number of Points	Scaled Score
1–11	1
11.5–16.5	1.5
17–22	2
22.5–27.5	2.5
28–33	3
33.5–38.5	3.5
39–44	4



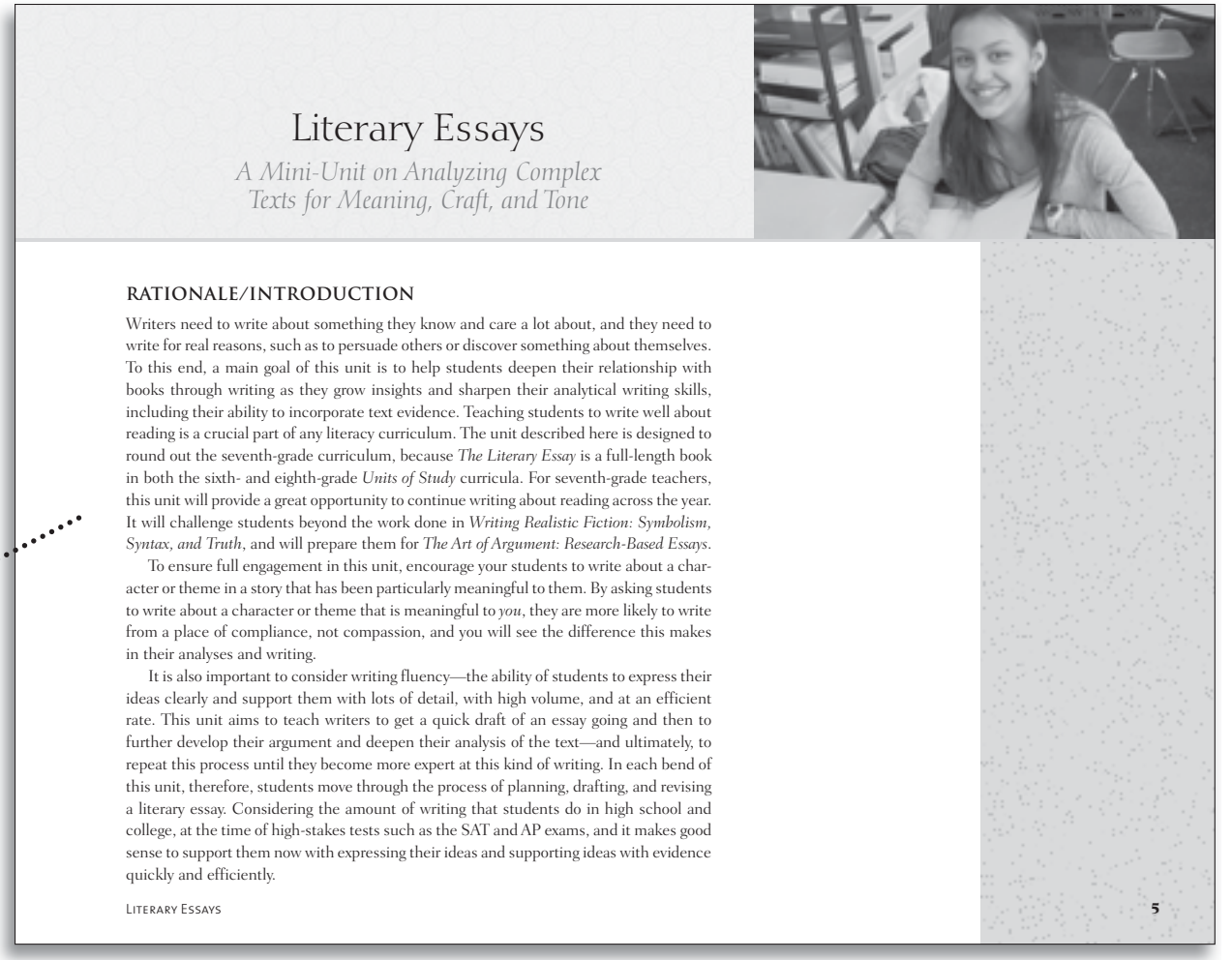
In addition to the three units of study, the Grade 8 series provides a book of if... then... curricular plans. ***If… Then… Curriculum: Assessment-Based Instruction, Grades 6–8*** supports targeted instruction and differentiation with nine alternative units of study for you to strategically teach before, after, or in between the core curriculum based on your students' needs. This resource also includes If... Then... Conferring Scenarios that help you customize your curriculum through individual and small-group instruction.

"The quality of writing instruction will rise dramatically not only when teachers study the teaching of writing but also when teachers study their own children's intentions and progress as writers. Strong writing is always tailored for and responsive to the writer."

ALTERNATE UNIT

Literary Essays: A Mini-Unit on Analyzing Complex Texts for Meaning, Craft, and Tone

IF you want a quick unit to hone students' skills with text-based writing, and to support their engaged reading, THEN writing literary essays will give students an opportunity to explore how theme and craft are related in the stories they read. Literary essays will also strengthen students' skills with analyzing text evidence and elaborating their thinking about complex texts.



Literary Essays

A Mini-Unit on Analyzing Complex Texts for Meaning, Craft, and Tone

RATIONALE/INTRODUCTION

Writers need to write about something they know and care a lot about, and they need to write for real reasons, such as to persuade others or discover something about themselves. To this end, a main goal of this unit is to help students deepen their relationship with books through writing as they grow insights and sharpen their analytical writing skills, including their ability to incorporate text evidence. Teaching students to write well about reading is a crucial part of any literacy curriculum. The unit described here is designed to round out the seventh-grade curriculum, because *The Literary Essay* is a full-length book in both the sixth- and eighth-grade *Units of Study* curricula. For seventh-grade teachers, this unit will provide a great opportunity to continue writing about reading across the year. It will challenge students beyond the work done in *Writing Realistic Fiction: Symbolism, Syntax, and Truth*, and will prepare them for *The Art of Argument: Research-Based Essays*.

To ensure full engagement in this unit, encourage your students to write about a character or theme in a story that has been particularly meaningful to them. By asking students to write about a character or theme that is meaningful to *you*, they are more likely to write from a place of compliance, not compassion, and you will see the difference this makes in their analyses and writing.

It is also important to consider writing fluency—the ability of students to express their ideas clearly and support them with lots of detail, with high volume, and at an efficient rate. This unit aims to teach writers to get a quick draft of an essay going and then to further develop their argument and deepen their analysis of the text—and ultimately, to repeat this process until they become more expert at this kind of writing. In each bend of this unit, therefore, students move through the process of planning, drafting, and revising a literary essay. Considering the amount of writing that students do in high school and college, at the time of high-stakes tests such as the SAT and AP exams, and it makes good sense to support them now with expressing their ideas and supporting ideas with evidence quickly and efficiently.

Literary Essays 5

Argument Writing

These charts will help you to anticipate, spot, and teach into the challenges your writers face during the independent work portion of your writing workshop. They lay out the specific strategy you might teach and the way you might contextualize the work for your writers.

If . . .	After acknowledging what the student is doing well, you might say . . .	Leave the writer with . . .
Structure and Cohesion		
The introduction does not forecast the structure of the essay. The writer has made a claim and supported it with reasons, but there is no forecasting statement early on in the essay that foreshadows the reasons to come. Instead, it seems as if the writer thought of and wrote about one reason, then, when reaching the end of the first body paragraph, thought, "What's another reason?" and then raised and elaborated upon that reason. He would benefit from learning to plan for the overarching structure of his argument and forecast that structure in the introduction.	You have learned to make a claim in your essay and to support that claim with reasons. As essayists, though, it's important to pre-plan how our essay will go, and to let the reader know how our writing will be organized from the very beginning. This is called forecasting. Today, I want to teach you that opinion writers forecast how their writing will go. They do this by stating their claim in the introduction and then adding on, "I think this because . . ." Then they list the reasons that they will write about in the body of their piece.	Writers use the introduction to forecast how their opinion pieces will go. 1. State your claim. 2. Tell your reader why your claim is true. • "One reason this is true is because . . ." • "Another reason this is true is because . . ." • "A third reason this is true is because . . ."
The writer's introduction and/or conclusion feel formulaic. The writer has stated her thesis upfront and forecasted the reasons to come in the essay. She has probably done something similar in her conclusion—wrapping up the essay by recapping her opinion and reasons. Though there is nothing wrong with this, the essay feels formulaic and dull. This writer would benefit from learning a few techniques to make her introduction and conclusion a place where she can grab a reader's attention, shed light on important issues, and appeal to her audience.	You have done everything that a teacher when writing an introduction and conclu thesis and told the reasons you have for it essay writers have mastered the basics, th step. That next step often means asking th readers take away from this essay? What do I want to leave them with?" Then, or questions, they know there are a few spec to get their message across.	

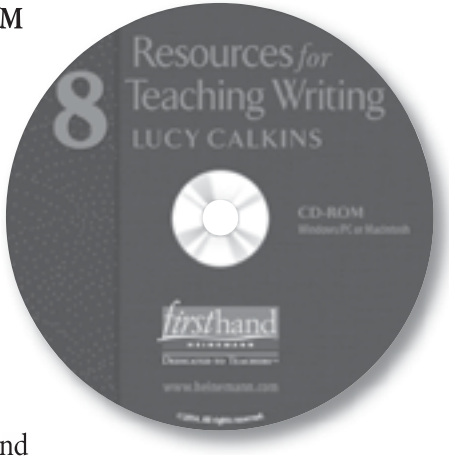
Narrative Writing

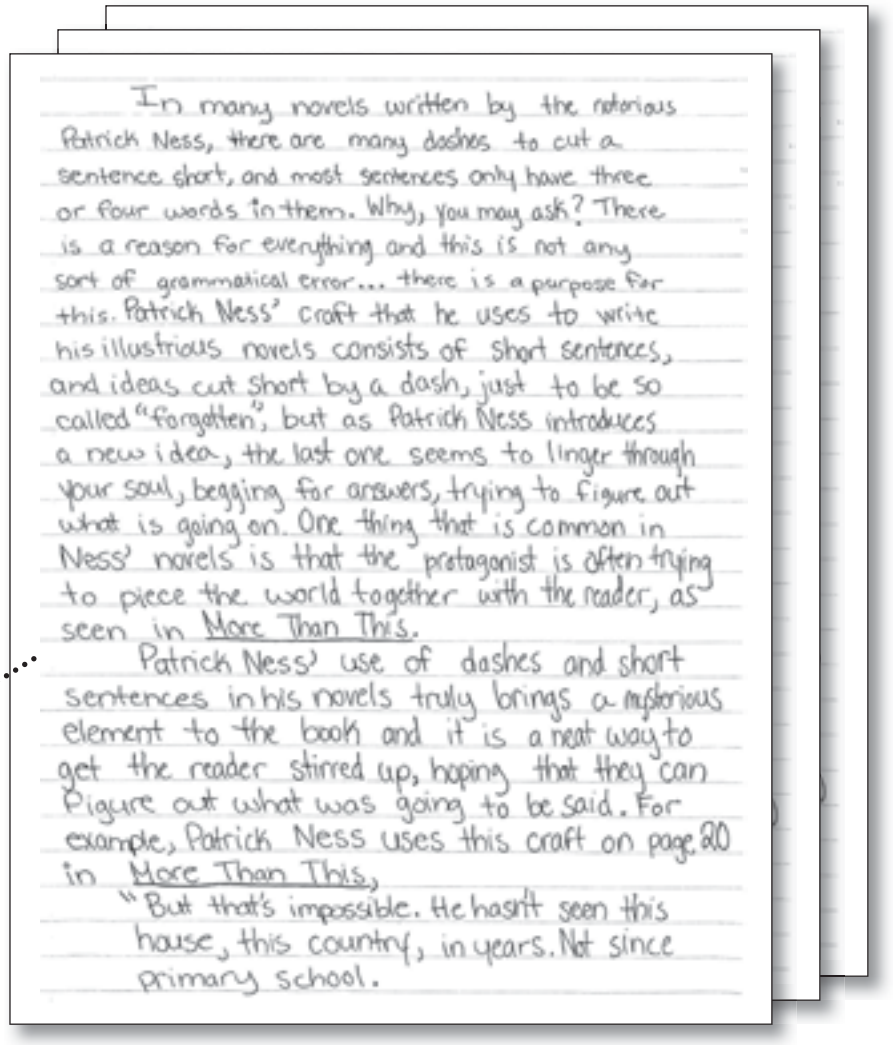
If . . .	After acknowledging what the student is doing well, you might say . . .	Leave the writer with . . .
Structure and Cohesion		
The writer is new to the writing workshop or this particular genre of writing. This writer struggles because narrative is a new genre for her—or she has been taught to write in ways that are different than those you are teaching. She may display certain skill sets (i.e., the ability to craft a strong plot line or to write with elaborate descriptive details) but lacks the vision of what she is being asked to produce. Most often, this means that she has not yet come to understanding the concept of a small, focused moment that is then elaborated upon. Her story is probably long and unfocused and is usually dominated by summary, not storytelling.	Someone famously once said, "You can't hit a target if you don't know what that target is." This is especially true for writers. They can't write well if they don't have a vision, a mental picture, of what they hope to produce. Today I want to teach you that one way writers learn about the kinds of writing they hope to produce is by studying mentor texts. They read a mentor text once, enjoying it as a story. Then, they read it again, this time asking, "How does this kind of story seem to go?" They label what they notice and then try it in their own writing.	Writers use mentor texts to help them imagine what they hope to write. They: • Read the text and enjoy it as a good story. • Reread the text and ask, "How does this kind of story seem to go?" • Annotate what they notice. (It can be helpful to do this right on the text with arrows pointing to the various things you see!) • Try to do some of what they noticed in their own writing.
The student seems to paragraph randomly or not much at all. When you read this writer's piece, you are struck by the paragraphing. It may be that he seems to be paragraphing in haphazard ways, as if he knows he should be creating paragraphs but does not know why or when. Alternatively, this writer may not paragraph often enough, making the piece of writing difficult to follow. Regardless of the issue, it is likely that this student would benefit from learning about some of the *reasons* narrative writers paragraph and then trying out a few different alternatives in his own writing.	When I first read your piece, I was struck by all the beautiful writing you have. Once in a while, though, I felt like I couldn't enjoy what you were attempting to do as a writer (perhaps point to a particular place where the writer tried to create tension or show a time change), because you didn't use paragraphs. It can be hard for a reader to take in all that we do as writers, and paragraphs act like signals that say, "Pause. Take this in. Something just happened or is about to happen." Today I want to teach you a few of the main reasons story writers use paragraphs. Specifically, writers often start new paragraphs when a new event is starting, when their story is switching to a new time or place, when a new character speaks, or when a very important part needs to be emphasized.	Make a new paragraph here: • Very important part needs emphasis • New event • New time • New place • New character speaks

"Despite the uniqueness of each child, there are particular ways they struggle, and predictable ways you can help. We can use all we know about child development, learning progressions, writing craft, and grade-specific standards to anticipate and plan for the individualized instruction our students are apt to need."

Resources for Teaching Writing CD-ROM

The ***Resources for Teaching Writing*** **CD-ROM** for Grade 8 provides unit-specific print resources to support your teaching throughout the year. You'll find a rich assortment of instructional tools including **learning progressions, checklists and rubrics, correlations to the CCSS,** and **teaching charts**. Offering daily support, these resources will help you establish a structured learning environment that fosters independence and self-direction.





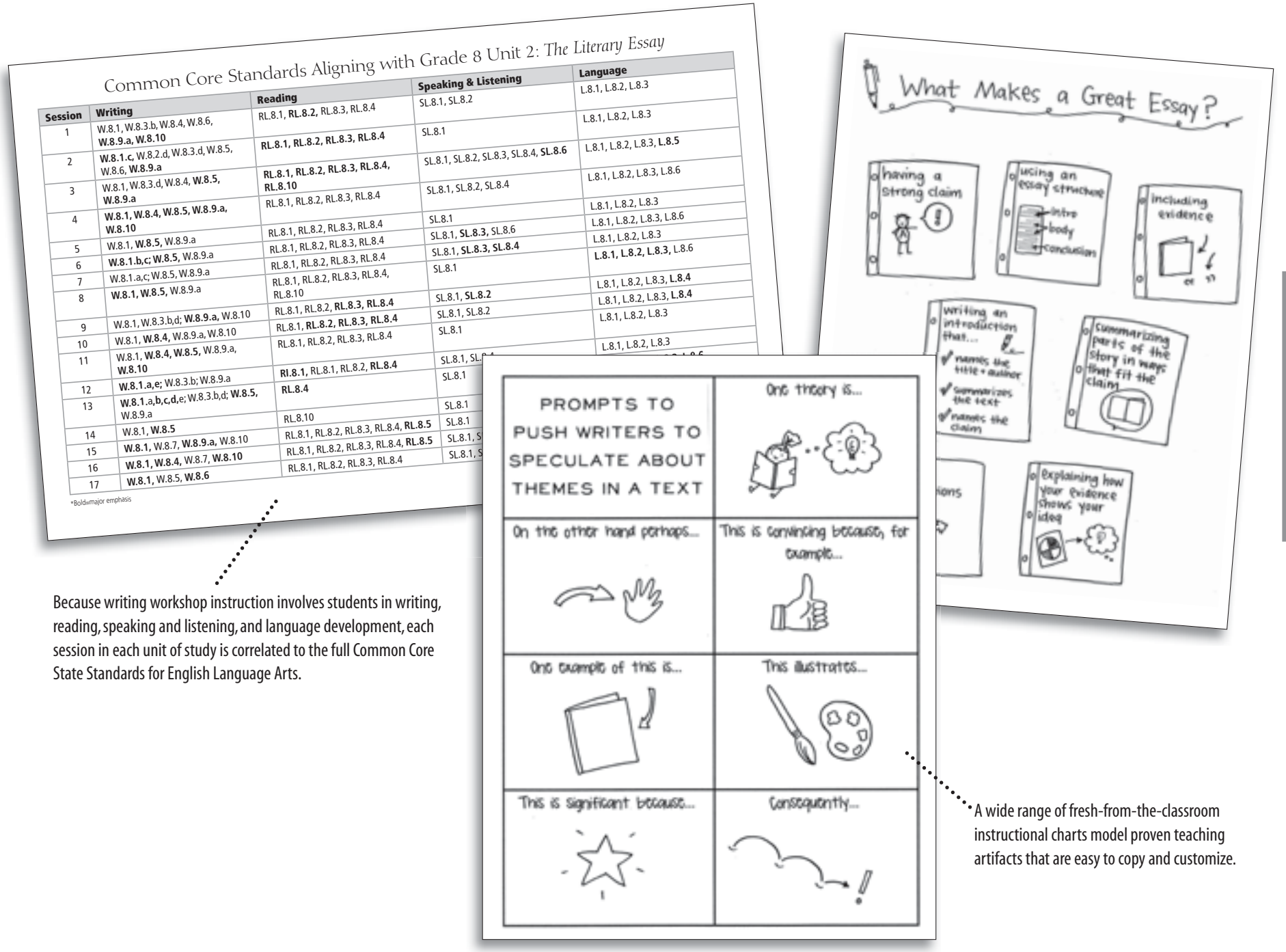
In many novels written by the notorious Patrick Ness, there are many dashes to cut a sentence short, and most sentences only have three or four words in them. Why, you may ask? There is a reason for everything and this is not any sort of grammatical error... there is a purpose for this. Patrick Ness' craft that he uses to write his illustrious novels consists of short sentences, and ideas cut short by a dash, just to be so called "forgotten", but as Patrick Ness introduces a new idea, the last one seems to linger through your soul, begging for answers, trying to figure out what is going on. One thing that is common in Ness' novels is that the protagonist is often trying to piece the world together with the reader, as seen in More Than This.

Patrick Ness' use of dashes and short sentences in his novels truly brings a mysterious element to the book and it is a neat way to get the reader stirred up, hoping that they can figure out what was going to be said. For example, Patrick Ness uses this craft on page 20 in More Than This,

"But that's impossible. He hasn't seen this house, this country, in years. Not since primary school.

Student writing samples illustrate different ways different students have exemplified the standard and highlight essential features of each writing genre.

"The writing workshop needs to be simple and predictable enough that your youngsters can learn to carry on within it independently. The materials and teaching tools you provide students will help you establish such a predictable, structured learning environment."



Common Core Standards Aligning with Grade 8 Unit 2: *The Literary Essay*

Session	Writing	Reading	Speaking & Listening	Language
1	W.8.1, W.8.3.b, W.8.4, W.8.6, **W.8.9.a, W.8.10**	RL.8.1, **RL.8.2,** RL.8.3, RL.8.4	SL.8.1, SL.8.2	L.8.1, L.8.2, L.8.3
2	**W.8.1.c,** W.8.2.d, W.8.3.d, W.8.5, W.8.6, **W.8.9.a**	**RL.8.1, RL.8.2, RL.8.3, RL.8.4**	SL.8.1	L.8.1, L.8.2, L.8.3
3	W.8.1, W.8.3.d, W.8.4, **W.8.5, W.8.9.a**	**RL.8.1, RL.8.2, RL.8.3, RL.8.4, RL.8.10**	SL.8.1, SL.8.2, SL.8.3, SL.8.4, **SL.8.6**	L.8.1, L.8.2, L.8.3, **L.8.5**
4	**W.8.1, W.8.4, W.8.5, W.8.9.a, W.8.10**	RL.8.1, RL.8.2, RL.8.3, RL.8.4	SL.8.1, SL.8.2, SL.8.4	L.8.1, L.8.2, L.8.3, L.8.6
5	W.8.1, **W.8.5,** W.8.9.a	RL.8.1, RL.8.2, RL.8.3, RL.8.4	SL.8.1	L.8.1, L.8.2, L.8.3
6	**W.8.1.b,c; W.8.5,** W.8.9.a	RL.8.1, RL.8.2, RL.8.3, RL.8.4	SL.8.1, **SL.8.3,** SL.8.6	L.8.1, L.8.2, L.8.3, L.8.6
7	W.8.1.a,c; W.8.5, W.8.9.a	RL.8.1, RL.8.2, RL.8.3, RL.8.4	SL.8.1, **SL.8.3, SL.8.4**	L.8.1, L.8.2, L.8.3
8	**W.8.1, W.8.5,** W.8.9.a	RL.8.1, RL.8.2, RL.8.3, RL.8.4, RL.8.10	SL.8.1	**L.8.1, L.8.2, L.8.3,** L.8.6
9	W.8.1, W.8.3.b,d; **W.8.9.a,** W.8.10	RL.8.1, RL.8.2, **RL.8.3, RL.8.4**	SL.8.1, **SL.8.2**	L.8.1, L.8.2, L.8.3, **L.8.4**
10	W.8.1, **W.8.4,** W.8.9.a, W.8.10	RL.8.1, **RL.8.2, RL.8.3, RL.8.4**	SL.8.1, SL.8.2	L.8.1, L.8.2, L.8.3, **L.8.4**
11	W.8.1, **W.8.4, W.8.5,** W.8.9.a, **W.8.10**	RL.8.1, RL.8.2, RL.8.3, RL.8.4	SL.8.1	L.8.1, L.8.2, L.8.3
12	**W.8.1.a,e;** W.8.3.b; W.8.9.a	**RI.8.1,** RL.8.1, RL.8.2, **RL.8.4**	SL.8.1, SL.8.4	L.8.1, L.8.2, L.8.3
13	**W.8.1**.a,**b,c,d,**e; W.8.3.b,d; **W.8.5,** W.8.9.a	**RL.8.4**	SL.8.1	
14	W.8.1, **W.8.5**	RL.8.10	SL.8.1	
15	**W.8.1,** W.8.7, **W.8.9.a,** W.8.10	RL.8.1, RL.8.2, RL.8.3, RL.8.4, **RL.8.5**	SL.8.1, S	
16	**W.8.1, W.8.4,** W.8.7, **W.8.10**	RL.8.1, RL.8.2, RL.8.3, RL.8.4, **RL.8.5**	SL.8.1, S	
17	**W.8.1,** W.8.5, **W.8.6**	RL.8.1, RL.8.2, RL.8.3, RL.8.4		

*Bold=major emphasis

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Implementation Webinar: A trained consultant can help you unpack your new Units of Study. Whether you want to jump right in and start teaching, or first explore the workshop's guiding principles and practices, this webinar will help you get started your way.
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Classroom Videos: More than 50 live-from-the-classroom videos let you eavesdrop on Lucy and her colleagues as they teach argument/opinion, information, and narrative writing. These clips model the Common Core minilessons, conferences, and shares you will engage in as you teach these units of study.
View these videos at **vimeo.com/tcrwp/albums**

Study Guide: A step-by-step guide offers professional learning communities a collegial platform to explore the series' features and components; also to plan their next steps.
Visit **unitsofstudy.com** *to download your copy today*

Resources: The Project posts important and useful resources throughout the year, along with examples of writing that students at every grade level, K–8, did during last year's units of study.
Visit **readingandwritingproject.com/resources.html**

Twitter Chats and Book Talks: On Wednesdays from 7:30–8:30 PM EST join Lucy and her colleagues for live chat sessions on topics supporting literacy instruction.
Follow them at **@tcrwp or search #TCRWP** *or* **#TCRWP Coaching**
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For additional information, contact:
Judith Chin, TCRWP Coordinator of Strategic Development at
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For additional information, contact
Lisa Cazzola, Project Coordinator at
lisa@readingandwritingproject.com
or call **212.678.3195**

For registrations and applications go to
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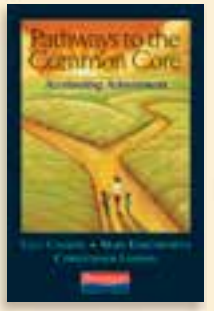

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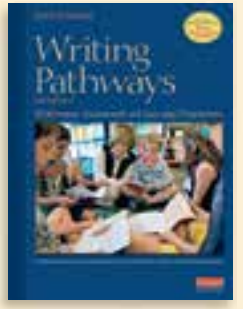

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ABOUT THE GRADE 8 AUTHORS

Lucy Calkins is the Founding Director of the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project at Teachers College, Columbia University. For more than thirty years, the Project has been both a think tank, developing state-of-the-art teaching methods, and a provider of professional development. As the leader of this renowned organization, Lucy works closely with policy makers, school principals, and teachers to initiate and support school-wide and system-wide reform in the teaching of reading and writing. Lucy is also the Robinson Professor of Children's Literacy at Teachers College, Columbia University, where she codirects the Literacy Specialist Program. Lucy's many books include the seminal *Art of Teaching Writing* (Heinemann 1994) and the Units of Study for Teaching Reading, grades 3–5 series (Heinemann 2010). *Pathways to the Common Core: Accelerating Achievement* (Heinemann 2012) is currently #8 on the New York Times' list of best-selling education books.

Mary Ehrenworth (EdD) is Deputy Director for Middle Schools at TCRWP. Through that role, she supports literacy-based school reform in schools across New York City, the nation, and a handful of other countries. As one of the coauthors of a book that has taken the nation by storm, *Pathways to the Common Core: Accelerating Achievement,* Mary is in demand as a speaker on the CCSS and on secondary school standards-based reform. Mary majored in art history and worked for a time as a museum educator—passions that shine through her first book, *Looking to Write: Students Writing through the Visual Arts* (Heinemann 2003). As well as being the coauthor of two other books in this writing series, Mary's interest in critical literacy, interpretation, and close reading all informed the books she coauthored with Lucy Calkins in the Units of Study for Teaching Reading, Grades 3–5 series (Heinemann 2010).

Cornelius Minor is a frequent keynote speaker for and staff developer at TCRWP. In that capacity, he works with teachers, school leaders, and leaders of community-based organizations to support deep and wide literacy reform in cities (and sometimes villages) across the globe. Whether working with teachers and young people in Singapore, Seattle, or New York City, Cornelius always uses his love for technology, hip-hop, and social media to recruit students' engagement in reading and writing and teachers' engagement in communities of practice. As a staff developer, Cornelius draws not only on his years teaching middle school in the Bronx and Brooklyn, but also on time spent skateboarding, shooting hoops, and working with young people.

As a Lead Staff Developer at TCRWP**, Kate Roberts** supports middle schools nationally and internationally. A former middle school teacher, Kate encourages educators to teach reading and writing through powerful and engaging units of study, rallying students to work towards rigorous and attainable goals. Above all, she helps teachers hold on to their love of kids and teaching. Kate is the coauthor (with Christopher Lehman) of *Falling in Love with Close Reading* (Heinemann 2013), as well as the cofounder of the blog *indent*. A proponent of social media, Kate works tirelessly to connect educators and to help make possible what sometimes appears impossible.

As a staff developer at TCRWP, **Katy Wischow** supports elementary and middle schools not only in New York City but also across the nation and the world. She has been an adjunct instructor at Columbia University's Teachers College, teaching graduate courses in literacy education. Before joining the Project, Katy earned her MA in the Literacy Specialist Program at Teachers College and taught for many years in Newark, NJ. Katy has always been passionate about curriculum development and about helping teachers bring their own reading and writing lives into their teaching.

Julie Shepherd is a middle school teacher. She spent five years teaching 8th grade Social Studies and Humanities at IS 289 in lower Manhattan. While there, she developed text sets that have been used by many other educators in NYC. Her classroom was frequently used as a Project lab site for NYC teachers and visiting educators from across the country. Julie earned her Master's Degree in Secondary Education from Simmons College in Boston. She currently teaches 7th grade Humanities in South Portland, Maine.

Audra Kirshbaum Robb is the Director of Performance Assessments at TCRWP. Audra has degrees in Comparative Literature and English Education, and taught middle school English Language Arts in New York City before joining the Project as a staff developer. Since then, she has become the resident expert on assessment at the Project. Audra led TCRWP's participation in pilot studies with the New York City Department of Education on the design, implementation, and instructional use of Common Core-aligned reading–writing performance assessments. She has worked closely with the Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning, and Equity (SCALE) on several projects. Audra also frequently leads workshops on incorporating poetry into ELA and content-area curriculum.

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