



GRADE
8

ELA
Grade Level
Overview

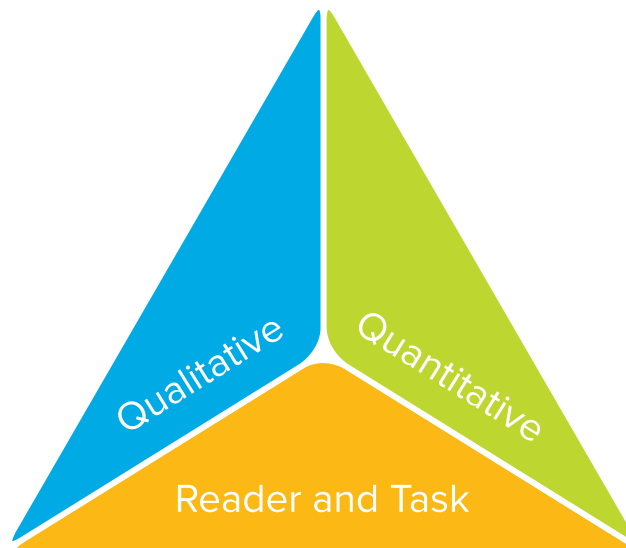


INTRODUCTION | GRADE 8

Through a broad spectrum of literary and informational genres, the Grade 8 Thematic Units explore the trials and tensions, great and small, of the human experience. Unit 1, “Suspense!”, steers readers through a labyrinth of dangerous possibilities and terrifying outcomes, offering a survey of why and how suspense grabs us. Unit 2, “In Time of War,” presents a historical mosaic of World War II, encompassing the courage of those in combat and on the home front, as well as the endurance of those victimized by the Holocaust or forced into confinement. Unit 3, “A Moral Compass,” addresses character-building opportunities and life lessons gained from family exemplars and everyday experiences. Unit 4, “The Civil War,” returns to the settings of history and war in a portrait of America’s bloodiest conflict, seen through the filter of slavery, patriotism, glory, fear, and fortitude.

ELA Grade Level Overview Grade 8

Text Complexity





UNIT 1: SUSPENSE!

Grade 8 Unit 1 serves as the jumping off point for students' grade level goal of proficiently reading and comprehending stories, poems, and literary nonfiction "in the grades 6-8 text complexity band, with scaffolding as needed in the high end of the range." This unit contains a balance of literature (7) and informational texts (4). While the quantitative dimensions (as measured by the Lexile® Framework) of some of the texts in this unit dip below the recommended quantitative band for Grades 6-8, qualitative dimensions, reader characteristics, and task demands make this a cohesive batch of texts appropriate to the demands of eighth grade readers.

Five of the seven literature selections in this unit are fiction, and the protagonists of four of these selections are adults or young adults. (In *Lord of the Flies*, by William Golding, all of the protagonists are adolescents.) These protagonists each experience a state of heightened excitement or anxious uncertainty about what may happen to them. The fiction selections in this unit do not contain any intertextual references, and the life experience and cultural/literary knowledge demands required of young readers are somewhat high. For example, in Lucille Fletcher's play *Sorry, Wrong Number*, a Common Core Appendix B text exemplar in this unit, the "Build Background" section of the First Read lesson plan addresses the text's prior knowledge demands as students research how the telephone system worked in the United States in the years following World War II, including the experience of operator-assisted dialing. In addition, the "Specific Vocabulary" section under Access Complex Text in both the First and Close Reads offer an explanation of theater terminology to help students visualize the play in performance.

Analyzing author's purpose and point of view and using textual evidence to support analysis is one of the primary task demands in this unit. The very first excerpt in the unit, *Let 'Em Play God*, by Alfred Hitchcock, emphasizes analyzing the text to discern the author's point of view in an informational text. This task demand makes this an important selection for students even though the quantitative dimensions of the excerpt are within the Grade 8 range. The complexities of Hitchcock's thinking are reflected in the challenges of the text and can be especially difficult for students who are unfamiliar with the example of Hitchcock's film *Rope*, which was released in 1948. To help students understand Hitchcock's theory as it relates to this and other films, the "Build Background" section of the First Read lesson plan addresses the text's prior knowledge demands: students research one of four films directed by Alfred Hitchcock to understand Hitchcock's theory in practice. Further, the excerpt from *Let 'Em Play God* creates an opportunity for students to apply Hitchcock's theory to other selections in the unit.

When students read the excerpt from *Ten Days in a Madhouse*, the final informational text selection in the unit, they will again analyze author’s purpose and point of view. They will be fully prepared to analyze a text that, while quantitatively similar to the excerpt from *Let ‘Em Play God*, contains multiple perspectives as well as more sophisticated, implicit levels of meaning as an example of narrative nonfiction.

Two of the five fictional texts in this unit feature unusual structural choices made by the author or take place in settings that will be relatively unfamiliar to students. These qualitative dimensions increase a text’s difficulty, even though the Lexile measures fall just below the Grade 8 range. *Lord of the Flies*, one of the texts that sits below the quantitative band for grades 6-8, features unfamiliar terms as well as mid 20th-century British slang, language and knowledge demands which are scaffolded in “Specific Vocabulary”. In Stephen King’s *Cujo*, the narration of events is interrupted by the italicized thoughts of Donna, the main character. Some of these thoughts appear as sentence fragments, which some students may have trouble distinguishing from the third-person narration. In this way, even texts that sit below the quantitative band for grades 6-8 require students to develop more sophisticated reading and comprehension skills.

Let 'Em Play God

AUTHOR	Name	Alfred Hitchcock
	Gender	Male
	Nationality	English
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1948
	Literature / Informational	Informational
	Genre	Essay
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	In Let 'Em Play God, Alfred Hitchcock analyzes the strategy he uses to create suspense in his films. To begin, he gives an example of a situation that does not evoke suspense. Then he describes his strategy of letting the audience “play God.” After a brief discussion that contrasts the puzzling whodunit with the suspenseful thriller, Hitchcock gives a detailed description of how his film Rope illustrates this strategy. The complexities of Hitchcock’s thinking are reflected in the challenges of the text. To help students understand Hitchcock’s theory, use the following ideas to provide scaffolded instruction for an initial reading of the more complex features of this text.
	ACT Features	<p>Connection of Ideas - Although Hitchcock discusses abstract ideas such as suspense and letting an audience “play God,” he provides concrete examples to explain this thinking. However, because students are likely to be unfamiliar with the example of Rope, it may be difficult for them to understand Hitchcock’s points. Readers may benefit by viewing an excerpt from the film</p> <p>Specific Vocabulary - Idiomatic expressions, such as “cry for joy” and “work like the devil,” may present a challenge for some readers. The expression “work like the devil” is explained for students in the skills lesson.</p> <p>Prior Knowledge - Students may not be familiar with Alfred Hitchcock and the film and actors cited in the selection. Sir Alfred Joseph Hitchcock (1899-1980) was an English film director and producer. Often nicknamed “The Master of Suspense,” Hitchcock pioneered many techniques in both the suspense and psychological thriller genres. After a successful career in England during the silent and early talkie period, Hitchcock moved to Hollywood in 1939 and became a US citizen in 1955. Over a career spanning more than half a century, Hitchcock pioneered the use of a movie camera made to move in a way that mimics a person's gaze, forcing viewers to engage in a form of voyeurism. He framed shots to maximize anxiety, fear, or empathy, and many of his films, such as Shadow of a Doubt (1943), Rope (1948), and North by Northwest (1959), feature fugitives on the run.</p>
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Excerpt Lexile®	1,070L
	Full-text Lexile®	NA
	Word Count	752
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Author’s Purpose and Author’s Point of View; Word Meaning
	Close Read Prompt	What does the author mean by the phrase “letting the audience play God”? Is the plot of the movie Rope that Hitchcock describes a good example of letting the audience “play God”? Why or why not? How does Hitchcock use the film as an illustration of his point of view? Be sure to cite textual evidence to develop your essay and support your ideas.
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Informative/Explanatory

The Monkey's Paw

AUTHOR	Name	W.W. Jacobs
	Gender	Male
	Nationality	English
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1902
	Literature / Informational	Literature
	Genre	Short Story
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	<p>“The Monkey’s Paw” is set in Victorian England. Since the story requires some prior knowledge of the culture, a brief summary may be helpful for some readers. The story opens with the White family spending a contented evening together at home. They are visited by Sergeant-Major Morris, who tells stories of his world travels and gives the family a mummified monkey’s paw that is said to grant wishes. W.W. Jacobs creates suspense as readers begin to suspect, through foreshadowing, mood, and dialogue, that the consequences of such wishes are terrible. The author continues to build tension and suspense as readers learn the tragic effects of Mr. White’s first two wishes. Mr. White uses the third wish just in time to avert further disaster. The elements of the genre are reflected in the challenges of the text. To help students understand the story’s theme, use the following ideas to provide scaffolded instruction for an initial reading of the more complex features of this text.</p>
	ACT Features	<p>Genre - Literary elements such as suspense, foreshadowing, and mood may require support to help students identify examples and purpose. In addition, students may need help linking story details to determine the theme. Initially, Mr. White says that he doesn’t know what to wish for: “I’ve got all I want.” Nonetheless, Mr. White ignores the Sergeant’s warning that the monkey’s paw is cursed by a holy man who wants “to show that fate ruled people’s lives, and that those who interfered with it did so to their sorrow.”</p>
		<p>Specific Vocabulary - Difficult vocabulary, such as “presumptuous” and “doggedly,” may challenge some readers. Remind students to use context clues while reading, and also to use a dictionary to define unfamiliar words.</p>
		<p>Prior Knowledge - Students may be unfamiliar with Indian cultural references to “old temples and fakirs and jugglers.” Point out that India was a colony of the British Empire during the time the story is set.</p>
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Excerpt Lexile®	940L
	Full-text Lexile®	940L
	Word Count	3,940
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Theme; Story Elements
	Close Read Prompt	How do the story elements of character, setting, and plot contribute to the theme of “The Monkey’s Paw”? Use your understanding of story elements to determine the theme of the short story. Then discuss how the elements combine to contribute to that theme. Support your writing with evidence from the text.
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Informative/Explanatory

Sorry, Wrong Number

AUTHOR	Name	Lucille Fletcher
	Gender	Female
	Nationality	American
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1948
	Literature / Informational	Literature
	Genre	Drama
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	Sorry, Wrong Number is a text that is meant to be performed. It has been performed on stage and on the radio, and was also made into a famous film. In order to read the excerpt of the play, students will need to understand the basic conventions of a drama. Stage directions, theatrical terms, character names, dialogue, and situations of the time period in which the play is set may present challenges for students. To help students understand the elements of a dramatic text, as well as characterization and plot development, use the following ideas to provide scaffolded instruction for an initial reading of the more complex features of this text.
	ACT Features	Genre - Review with students the elements of a dramatic script and the purpose of each element. Note that the author of a play is called a playwright. Explain that playwrights include stage directions to demonstrate how the action of the play should look in performance, including who is on stage, where they are, and any cues, such as for sounds, lights, or character entrances and exits.
		Organization - Point out that a play is divided into acts and scenes rather than chapters. Note that playwrights organize the events using stage directions and dialogue. Stage directions are usually placed in brackets, and in italicized font. Explain that dialogue is indicated first by character names, which are often written in all caps, followed by a colon.
		Specific Vocabulary - To better understand the play, students will need two kinds of vocabulary support. First, an explanation of a few theater terms may be helpful. In order to better picture what is happening on the stage, review terms such as “the curtain rises,” “stage set,” and “spotlight.” A second kind of vocabulary has to do with descriptions of the main character and specific locations, as well as period language. For example, part of Mrs. Stevenson’s character description is that she is a “neurotic.”
	Prior Knowledge - Students will most likely be unfamiliar with telephone communication as it was practiced in the time the play is set. Explain that all phones were landlines. In addition, point out that most people could not afford a totally private line, but instead had to share using a “party line”. This is a telephone service line shared by more than one person.	
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Excerpt Lexile®	NA
	Full-text Lexile®	NA
	Word Count	582
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Textual Evidence; Plot
	Close Read Prompt	Analyze the ways in which fear and suspense is introduced and maintained during this play’s developing plot. Consider how the suspense naturally causes the reader to make predictions about what may happen in the text. Consider the sound effects, the content and structure of the lines, and the way the characters’ voices may sound when the lines are spoken aloud on a stage. Use textual evidence from Sorry, Wrong Number to support your analysis.
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Argumentative

Violence in the Movies

AUTHOR	Name	NA
	Gender	NA
	Nationality	NA
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	2014
	Literature / Informational	Informational
	Genre	Pro-Con/Op-Ed
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	These texts illustrate two distinctly different cause-and-effect viewpoints supported by researched evidence on the societal effects of violence in the movies. In both cases, much of the evidence is academic, derived from published studies and statistical analyses. The alternating viewpoints and their source materials may be challenging for some students. To help students evaluate the credibility of each argument, use the following ideas to provide scaffolded instruction for an initial reading of the more complex features of these texts.
	ACT Features	<p>Purpose - Although each author writes to persuade readers to agree with his or her position, the points of view are opposing. To evaluate credibility, readers will need to examine each piece of evidence to determine its type and its source as well as whether each author provides all needed information and addresses valid counter-arguments effectively.</p> <p>Organization - Each author makes claims regarding the causes of violence in society. Readers will need to identify these cause-and-effect relationships and evaluate the logic of each.</p> <p>Specific Vocabulary - Psychological or media terminology, such as “desensitization” or “propaganda,” may challenge some readers.</p>
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Excerpt Lexile®	1,190L
	Full-text Lexile®	1,190L
	Word Count	1,353
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Author’s Purpose and Author’s Point of View
	Close Read Prompt	The authors of these articles hold different points of view on whether or not violence in Hollywood movies has a negative effect on society. Which author is more convincing? Which author best supports his or her points with strong evidence? Use your understanding of point of view and supporting evidence to defend one of the two claims. Support your writing with evidence from the text and additional media evidence support.
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Argumentative

A Night to Remember

AUTHOR	Name	Walter Lord
	Gender	Male
	Nationality	American
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1955
	Literature / Informational	Informational
	Genre	Informational
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	A Night to Remember gives an account of the history-making voyage of the Titanic and its tragic end on the night of April 14, 1912, when it strikes an iceberg and sinks. The author provides readers with various passengers' and crew members' points of view as he explains the beginning of the disaster in a suspenseful, chronological order. To help students understand the idea that history is an accumulation of viewpoints, use the following ideas to provide scaffolded instruction for an initial reading of the more complex features of this text.
	ACT Features	Organization
Specific Vocabulary		Nautical terminology, such as quartermaster and knots, may present a challenge to some readers. In the British Royal Navy, the quartermaster is the person who steers the ship. Titanic had six quartermasters on board, all of whom took turns. A knot is a unit of speed equal to one nautical mile (1.852 km) per hour, approximately 1.151 mph.
Prior Knowledge		Although most readers may have heard of the ship Titanic, some readers will not be familiar with the passengers and their backgrounds. Some knowledge of the culture created on Titanic will inform readers' understanding of the tragedy. Some of the richest people in the world were traveling on Titanic for her maiden voyage which started in Belfast, in Northern Ireland, and was to end in New York City. This included prominent members of the upper class that included politicians, businessmen and women, bankers, professional athletes, and industrialists.
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Excerpt Lexile®	1,050L
	Full-text Lexile®	950L
	Word Count	1,147
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Author's Purpose
	Close Read Prompt	How do the reactions of the Titanic passengers affect your knowledge and your feelings about the collision? How is the experience different from reading a straight description by Walter Lord? Explain what this shows about the importance of point of view in texts. In your explanation, refer to specific connections among individuals, ideas, or events. Use quotations from the text to support your ideas.
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Argumentative

Cujo

AUTHOR	Name	Stephen King
	Gender	Male
	Nationality	American
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1981
	Literature / Informational	Literature
	Genre	Novel
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	This excerpt from <i>Cujo</i> focuses on a suspenseful scene at a remote car repair shop, where Donna Trenton and her four-year-old son Tad are confronted by a St. Bernard named <i>Cujo</i> that is wild with rabies. In this excerpt, Donna freezes in panic when confronted by <i>Cujo</i> and barely manages to get safely back inside the car. The excerpt ends with mother and child trapped inside their car with a violent “monster” clawing to get in and no help in sight. The challenges of the text are reflected in the limited third-person narrative, which reveals the sequence of events as well as Donna’s thoughts. To help students understand Donna’s responses to the fear she experiences, use the following ideas to provide scaffolded instruction for an initial reading of the more complex features of this text.
	ACT Features	<p>Organization - The text is organized chronologically around a rapidly unfolding event. However, the narration of events is interrupted by the italicized thoughts of Donna, the main character. Remind readers that a limited third-person narrator focuses on one character, who, in this case, is Donna.</p> <p>Purpose - The text is structured to build suspense and fear. Readers will need to focus on how the author focuses on sensory details, beginning with sound and followed sequentially by touch and sight, to achieve this purpose.</p> <p>Sentence Structure - Some of Donna’s italicized thoughts are written as sentence fragments. Readers should recognize that this structure mimics real thought, which does not always occur in complete sentences.</p>
	Excerpt Lexile®	870L
	Full-text Lexile®	830L
Word Count	1,310	
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Textual Evidence
	Close Read Prompt	Watch the 1983 film version of this scene. Then reread the excerpt. How did director Lewis Teague stay true to the original novel? What liberties did he take with the script? What inferences did you make in the text passage that are retained or abandoned in the film version? In about 300 words, analyze the choices the film director made and the effects these changes have on your perception of the characters as well as the film’s level of suspense.
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Informative/Explanatory

*Lord of the Flies

AUTHOR	Name	William Golding
	Gender	Male
	Nationality	English
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1955
	Literature / Informational	Literature
	Genre	Novel
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	This excerpt from Lord of the Flies is set on a remote island where a group of British schoolboys have crash-landed. With no adults present, the boys realize that they will have to look after themselves. Tension builds as some boys are singled out as weak or different, sides are chosen, and a leader is elected. Ambiguous dialogue and complex characterization are reflected in the challenges of the text. To help students familiarize themselves with the characters, use the following ideas to provide scaffolded instruction for an initial reading of the more complex features of this text.
	ACT Features	Connection of Ideas - Readers have to figure out that there are two potential rivals, Jack and Ralph, and that this rivalry is cause for conflict, even at this early stage in the story.
		Sentence Structure - The excerpt includes untagged dialogue from many different speakers. Readers will have to determine who is speaking in order to follow the action and characterization. It may help readers to read aloud the excerpt with a different speaker assigned to each boy's dialogue.
		Specific Vocabulary - Certain terms, such as "Gib," "Addis," and "precentor," will most likely be unfamiliar to most readers. In the thirteenth paragraph, after one of the boys flops onto the sand, Merridew says "He's always throwing a faint. He did in Gib.; and Addis; and at matins over the precentor." "Gib" and "Addis" are shortened terms for Gibraltar and Addis Ababa, in Ethiopia, refueling stops for the plane that was carrying the boys. A precentor is a choir master. Also, words such as "chapter chorister" and "head boy" are meant to show Jack's authority, but these terms, and their connections, may not be clear to readers. They are choir terms meant to disclose Jack's high standing in the choir. Students may also be unfamiliar with the word "conch." A conch is a large tropical marine mollusk with a spiral shell. One of the boys, Ralph, uses the shell to make a trumpet-like sound. Finally, the author uses British slang of the period, as in the fourteenth paragraph that begins, "This last piece of shop brought sniggers from the choir." The word "shop" is slang for "information."
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Excerpt Lexile®	570L
	Full-text Lexile®	770L
	Word Count	997
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Theme; Character
	Close Read Prompt	Think about the relationship between the characters of Ralph and Piggy as revealed in this excerpt. How does Jack Merridew affect this relationship? Use your understanding of character and theme to examine the relationship between Ralph and Piggy and what it might suggest about the rules and challenges of friendship.
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Informative/Explanatory

*Suggested Full-text Study

Ten Days in a Mad-House (Chapter IV)

AUTHOR	Name	Nellie Bly
	Gender	Female
	Nationality	American
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1887
	Literature / Informational	Informational
	Genre	Non-fiction
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	In this excerpt from Ten Days in a Mad-House, reporter Nellie Bly pretends to be affected by a mental illness in front of a judge for the purpose of gaining admittance to the Women's Lunatic Asylum on Blackwell Island. At the turn of the 19th century, people did not understand the severity and characteristics of mental illnesses. For this reason, Nellie Bly endeavors to uncover the conditions and treatments within the "mad-house" while gaining valuable insight to push for change. To help students understand Bly's undercover investigation, use the following ideas to provide scaffolded instruction for an initial reading of the more complex features of this text.
	ACT Features	<p>Organization - The first-person narrative switches back and forth between the plot of Bly's feigned insanity and her thoughts regarding the success of this plot. For example, "I did not come to New York," I replied (while I added, mentally, 'because I have been here for some time.')</p> <p>Specific Vocabulary - Some idiomatic expressions, such as a description of a judge "dealing out the milk of human kindness by wholesale," may present challenges for some readers. In this case, it refers to a judge who is exceedingly kind.</p> <p>Prior Knowledge - Students may be unfamiliar with the practice of court-ordered assignment to an insane asylum without the commission of a crime.</p>
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Excerpt Lexile®	900L
	Full-text Lexile®	NA
	Word Count	1,602
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Author's Purpose and Author's Point of View
	Close Read Prompt	What is Nellie Bly's point of view about the plight of the poor and mentally ill and the attitudes of officials toward these people? How does she use humor, dramatic irony, and descriptive adjectives to reveal her opinions? What do Bly's opinions and actions tell you about her as a person? Support your writing with evidence from the text.
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Informative/Explanatory

The Tell-Tale Heart

AUTHOR	Name	Edgar Allan Poe
	Gender	Male
	Nationality	American
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1843
	Literature / Informational	Literature
	Genre	Shorty Story
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	Edgar Allan Poe's Gothic short story "The Tell-Tale Heart" is set in the home of the story's narrator as he comes to entertain three police officers who have been called by a neighbor in response to a shriek heard during the night. In the end, Poe's narrator confesses to killing an old man in his care because he becomes convinced that officers can hear the dead man's heart beating through the floorboards. The first-person point of view and the narrator's gradual confession and descent into madness are reflected in the challenges of the text. To help students understand the narrator's unfolding mental state, use the following ideas to provide scaffolded instruction for an initial reading of the more complex features of this text.
	ACT Features	<p>Organization - The text is organized so as to gradually reveal the narrator's murder of the old man. The text's first-person point of view may challenge some students as the narrator alternates between external description and internal thought. Readers will need to distinguish between fact and perception.</p> <p>Sentence Structure - Long sentences are broken by dashes and capital letters to indicate the narrator's anxious, fragmented thinking. In addition, point out to students that Poe is using nonstandard font, punctuation, and other devices as visual cues to the narrator's emotional state. While this kind of style is evident today in text messages and other communications, Poe's use of these devices was quite innovative at the time.</p> <p>Specific Vocabulary - Difficult vocabulary, such as unperceived and over-acuteness, may present a challenge to readers. Remind readers to use context clues, as well as knowledge of Greek and Latin roots and affixes, to help them define unknown words. When needed, students should use a print or digital resource to help them.</p>
	QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Excerpt Lexile®
Full-text Lexile®		950L
Word Count		2,163
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Textual Evidence; Greek and Latin Affixes and Roots
	Close Read Prompt	Suppose you are the narrator's attorney, assigned to defend him in the aftermath of the murder he committed. Since the narrator freely admitted to the police that he committed the crime, you have decided to have him enter a plea of "not guilty by reason of insanity." First, identify evidence in the text that you believe most strongly illustrates the narrator's psychological state before, during, and after the murder. Then, identify details that you would advise the narrator to leave out during his testimony, as they reflect poorly on his character and might alienate or offend the jury. Finally, based on text evidence, construct a brief "closing argument" to the jury that makes the case that the narrator is not guilty by reason of insanity for the crime of murder.
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Argumentative

Annabel Lee

AUTHOR	Name	Edgar Allan Poe
	Gender	Male
	Nationality	American
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1849
	Literature / Informational	Literature
	Genre	Poem
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	In “Annabel Lee,” Edgar Allan Poe explores themes of loss and love as the speaker tells about losing his young beloved to death. Students are asked to analyze poetic elements. To help students master this skill, use the following ideas to provide scaffolded instruction for an initial reading of the more complex features of this text.
	ACT Features	<p>Organization - The poem establishes and then breaks structural patterns. For example, a long line followed by a short line or rhyming short lines. Readers should question the effects of both the patterns and the changes to these patterns.</p> <p>Genre - The poem contains many symbols, or items that represent ideas beyond their literal meanings. There are natural symbols: the sea, the moon, and the stars. There are religious symbols: angels and seraphs. There are fairy tale symbols: the kingdom and the kinsmen. Readers should consider how these images represent the speaker’s emotional state following the death of his beloved.</p> <p>Specific Vocabulary - Difficult vocabulary, such as coveted and sepulchre, may present a challenge for some readers.</p>
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Excerpt Lexile®	NA
	Full-text Lexile®	NA
	Word Count	299
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Poetic Elements
	Close Read Prompt	Identify those lines in the poem that most clearly allow you to follow the “story” of the poem. Then retell the story of the poem in prose. Finally, explain what the poem loses when it becomes a prose story rather than a poem. How does the poem’s rhythm and rhyme, as well as other poetic elements, support its theme or message? Use evidence from the text, as well as from comparing your retelling with that of the poem itself, to support your response.
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Informative/Explanatory

The Bells

AUTHOR	Name	Edgar Allan Poe
	Gender	Male
	Nationality	American
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1849
	Literature / Informational	Literature
	Genre	Poem
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	In “The Bells,” Edgar Allan Poe’s speaker describes the sounds of four different types of bells embedded within particular settings. The mood shifts from happiness to misery as readers hear sleigh bells, then wedding bells, then alarm bells, and finally ghoulish iron bells. Students are asked to analyze poetic elements. To help students master this skill, use the following suggestions to provide scaffolded instruction for an initial reading of the more complex features of this text.
	ACT Features	Purpose - Rather than tell a story, the poem moves readers through an emotional range via sound. This purpose may challenge some readers. Remind them that poetry may create an emotion or an experience rather than address a traditional topic or storyline.
		Genre - The poem relies heavily on onomatopoeia. Readers must consider the effect of this sound device on the poem.
		Connection of Ideas - The mood shifts from stanza to stanza. Readers should analyze how Poe achieves these shifts.
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Excerpt Lexile®	NA
	Full-text Lexile®	NA
	Word Count	607
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Poetic Elements
	Close Read Prompt	An alternate reading of “The Bells” is that the poem’s theme is about the changing of the seasons, as opposed to the story of a tragic loss and subsequent grief. Choose one theme and use text evidence, including examples of specific word choices, as well as personal experience and inference, to defend your interpretation of the poem’s theme.
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Argumentative



UNIT 2: IN TIME OF WAR

Grade 8 Unit 2 moves students further along toward their grade level goal of proficiently reading and comprehending literature, including drama, stories, and literary nonfiction “in the grades 6-8 text complexity band, with scaffolding as needed in the high end of the range.” The unit integrates social studies into the reading standards, including both primary and secondary sources as well as historical fiction and drama, from which students will draw textual evidence to support analysis. The quantitative dimensions (as measured by the Lexile® Framework) of the texts in this unit fall within the recommended quantitative band for Grades 6-8, with the exception of three historically important texts. All selections in the unit demonstrate qualitative dimensions, reader characteristics, and task demands that make them accessible to and appropriate for eighth grade readers.

The unit blends historically significant speeches, serious debate, personal accounts, and scholarly analysis to provide students with a wide lens through which to view the events of and surrounding World War II. The informational texts that anchor this unit include speeches, letters, personal testimony, argument, and narrative nonfiction. These selections represent text complexity, intertextual references, and demands on the life experience and cultural and historical knowledge of young readers. The First Read lessons accompanying selections with very high demand on historical knowledge, such as the excerpts from Churchill’s speech “Blood, Toil, Tears and Sweat,” a Common Core Appendix B text exemplar, and the nonfiction accounts *Dear Miss Breed*, *Parallel Journeys*, and *Hitler Youth: Growing Up in Hitler’s Shadow*, are scaffolded with Build Background research activities as well as information to help students gain access to knowledge of the topics.

All the informational texts fall within the quantitative Lexile dimensions for Grade 8, with the exception of the excerpt from “Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech.” This speech, delivered by noted writer and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel on the occasion of receiving the Nobel Prize for Peace, offers relevant and important commentary on the nature of survival during and after wartime. The Skills lessons that accompany the informational texts address the unit task demands for analyzing text connections, author’s point of view and purpose, and the role of different mediums in presenting information, as well as using textual evidence to support that analysis. These task demands, combined with the complex intertextual references, make these informational texts relevant and challenging for students. First Read lessons provide vocabulary and grammar support.

The literary texts for this unit include the recommended full-text read for this unit, *The Diary of Anne Frank: A Play*, a Common Core Appendix B text exemplar based on *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl*, also excerpted in the unit. The additional literary text, *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas*, meets the quantitative and qualitative dimensions of the texts recommended for this grade. While the quantitative dimensions of the excerpt from *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl* are lower than other selections in the unit, this selection has qualitative dimensions, including historical context and the voice of the writer, that provide students an opportunity to analyze two versions of Anne’s experiences during the Holocaust. The Skill lessons that accompany *The Diary of Anne Frank: A Play*, address the unit task demands of analysis of dramatic elements, such as the role of dialogue to reveal character, the development of theme, and the way a filmed production of a drama remains faithful to or departs from the source text. These task demands, combined with the complex intertextual references, make the literary texts meaningful, challenging selections for students.

Blood, Toil, Tears and Sweat

AUTHOR	Name	Winston Churchill
	Gender	Male
	Nationality	English
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1940
	Literature / Informational	Informational
	Genre	Speech
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	Winston Churchill was made Prime Minister of Great Britain on May 10, 1940. This was also the date on which Germany, led by Adolf Hitler, invaded France, Belgium, Holland, and Luxembourg. Neville Chamberlain, who had been Prime Minister up to this point, had tried to make a treaty with Hitler two years earlier, in 1938, announcing “Peace for our time.” The treaty was an attempt to avoid yet another war with Germany, but Chamberlain’s plan had clearly failed. With these new attacks, Chamberlain had to resign. This excerpt from “Blood, Toil, Tears and Sweat” provides readers with key parts of a speech Churchill delivered to the House of Commons on May 13, 1940, just three days after taking on the task of leading the nation. The speech was designed to elicit support for a nation going to war.
	ACT Features	<p>Specific Vocabulary – Point out that the phrase “His Majesty” is in reference to the king. Students will most likely be unfamiliar with Churchill’s references to the political parties that comprised the British government at that time. Point out that Labour, Opposition, and Liberals refer to various parties of differing viewpoints among themselves as well as with Churchill’s Conservative Party.</p> <p>Genre – The unique and specific features of a speech include tone, purpose, and compelling emotion. Students may need support in recognizing how a speech given in a time of war to Parliament conveys a specific, emotional tone.</p> <p>Connection of Ideas – Students will need some guidance to understand the excerpted paragraphs of the speech, but the main point is that Churchill begins the speech by outlining the order from the king to appoint a new administration and gradually builds up the intent and urgency of going to war.</p> <p>Sentence Structure – Students unfamiliar with the rhetoric of political speech may be challenged by Churchill’s weaving together of rhetoric, including the technique of anticipating an audience’s questions and decisively answering them.</p>
	Excerpt Lexile®	1,070L
	Full-text Lexile®	1,070L
Word Count	627	
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Textual Evidence; Central or Main Idea
	Close Read Prompt	According to Churchill's speech, what will war mean for the British people, and why should England be involved? How does the main idea of Churchill's speech reveal his response to conflict, and what does this say about him? Support your writing with textual evidence from the speech.
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Informative/Explanatory

Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl

AUTHOR	Name	Anne Frank
	Gender	Female
	Nationality	Polish
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1947
	Literature / Informational	Informational
	Genre	Autobiography
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	To help students understand Anne Frank’s emotional, personal responses to the pogrom against Jews in Nazi-occupied Holland, as well as how her family copes under duress, use the following suggestions to provide more scaffolded instruction for for an initial reading of the more complex features of this text:
	ACT Features	<p>Purpose – Students may be confused by the fact that the diary is written as a letter, which is a choice the author made. Anne Frank uses the diary as a friend that she confides in, and she writes to tell her friend about both the daily events of her life as well as her emotional experiences. Students may need clarification regarding the identity of “Kitty” and the imagined audience of this personal diary.</p> <p>Organization – Students may find the text challenging in that it is a first-draft record of a person’s inner thoughts and impressions, and therefore may not be organized clearly. Even though Anne Frank’s diary entries are written chronologically, the thoughts and recollections of the author may at times travel backward or forward.</p> <p>Specific Language – Students may be unfamiliar with certain Dutch words as well as words and concepts specific to the Nazi Movement that are used in this text. Terms such as “pogrom,” “concentration camp,” and “call-out” may need to be clarified, for example.</p> <p>Prior Knowledge – Jews had to observe a curfew between 8 P.M. and 6 A.M. and were only allowed to shop between 3 P.M. and 5 P.M. Public transportation and telephones were forbidden for Jews and they were also forbidden to enter the homes of non-Jews. In July, 1942, two concentration camps were established in Holland, Westerbork and Vught. From these camps many Dutch Jews were shipped to other camps, primarily Auschwitz in Poland, where many of them were killed.</p>
	Excerpt Lexile®	790L
	Full-text Lexile®	1,080L
Word Count	1,259	
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Informational Text Elements
	Close Read Prompt	If Kitty were a person instead of a diary, Anne Frank might expect to receive a response. How might a friend respond to Anne in her time of crisis? Suppose you are Anne’s friend, and that the entries from her diary are letters to you. Choose one of the three entries and write a letter to Anne in response. Be sure to include an appropriate day, date, greeting, and signature. Refer to details from her letter, including Anne’s central idea, in your response.
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Narrative

*The Diary of Anne Frank: A Play

AUTHOR	Name	Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett
	Gender	Female and Male
	Nationality	American
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1955
	Literature / Informational	Literature
	Genre	Historical Play
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	This excerpt from The Diary of Anne Frank: A Play dramatizes the events described in Anne Frank’s diary. As the play opens, the events are shown from the perspective of Anne’s father, Otto, upon his return home after the war has ended. To help students better understand the dramatic interpretation of Anne’s diary, Otto’s difficult homecoming, and his emotions, use the following ideas to provide scaffolded instruction for an initial reading of the more complex features of this text.
	ACT Features	<p>Genre – For students who have read Anne Frank’s diary or an excerpt, it will be important for them to distinguish between entries that Anne records and the way the playwrights use the entries to write a drama. Review with students the labeling of acts and scenes, as well as the purpose of stage directions. In addition, point out that the action of the play is told primarily through dialogue, with the names of the speakers noted in all caps followed by a colon. Explain that while the diary is narrative nonfiction, the playwrights needed to fictionalize the events in order to create the dialogue. While Anne recounts events and her responses to them, she does not record exact dialogue throughout.</p> <p>Organization – Students may be challenged by the function of time in the play. Though the excerpt begins with Otto Frank returning after the war to stand among his broken family’s belongings, a flashback sequence is used as we soon hear his daughter Anne’s voice reading from the diary she had started three years earlier. Explain that Otto is the only known family survivor, and that the events of the play are ones remembered by Otto.</p> <p>Sentence Structure – The dialogue in the play is written to be spoken aloud by characters. Explain that the sentences of dialogue are written and punctuated to mimic natural speech and to suggest emotions and active thinking by the characters, so the sentences may not flow as crafted prose would.</p> <p>Prior Knowledge – There are a number of allusions to what the Franks and other Jewish families endured while in hiding and after being captured by the Nazis. Students may need more background in the events that provide context for the events of the play.</p>
	Excerpt Lexile®	NA
	Full-text Lexile®	NA
Word Count	1,002	
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Dramatic Elements; Theme; Media
	Close Read Prompt	How does political or national conflict influence individual families? How does The Diary of Anne Frank: A Play explore this theme? What elements of the play help you understand this influence? Support your answer with text evidence from the selection.
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Informative/Explanatory

*Suggested Full-text Study

The Boy in the Striped Pajamas: A Fable

AUTHOR	Name	John Boyne
	Gender	Male
	Nationality	Irish
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	2006
	Literature / Informational	Literature
	Genre	Novel
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	Connection of Ideas – Though Bruno is unaware of Shmuel’s true fate as a prisoner in a Nazi concentration camp, the author has included several clues to allow the reader to understand what Bruno does not. Students may need guidance to decipher these clues (e.g., Shmuel’s skeletal fingers reveal starvation and his terror of Lieutenant Kotler reveals abuse) and make connections to understand the situation beyond Bruno’s limited point of view.
	ACT Features	<p>Genre – Because this is a historical fiction, students will need to understand references to real places and events. Students can gain deeper access to the text by understanding that “Out-With” is Auschwitz, the largest concentration camp complex established by the Nazis, located in southern Poland.</p> <p>Prior Knowledge – Students who lack prior knowledge of WWII and the Holocaust will struggle to unlock meaning in this text. Students may wish to explore additional information about Auschwitz to develop a deeper understanding of Shmuel’s plight, as well as Bruno’s apparent ignorance about what is happening on the “other side of the fence.”</p>
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Excerpt Lexile®	1,080L
	Full-text Lexile®	1,080L
	Word Count	1,370
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Point of View; Character
	Close Read Prompt	How can point of view and character shape the overall theme of a text? Identify the theme of "The Boy in the Striped Pajamas: A Fable" and discuss how character and point of view contribute to the theme. Include textual evidence to support your writing.
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Informative/Explanatory

Teaching History Through Fiction

AUTHOR	Name	NA	
	Gender	NA	
	Nationality	NA (USA)	
	Translator		
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	2014	
	Literature / Informational	Informational	
	Genre	Pro/Con Op-Ed	
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	The writers of the Point and Counterpoint essays that make up the selection Teaching History Through Fiction present complex arguments about the use of fiction to teach history. Because both arguments focus on the way teachers might use John Boyne's <i>The Boy in the Striped Pajamas</i> in history lessons, issues around the sensitive and accurate treatment of the Holocaust are addressed in both essays. Use the following suggestions to provide more scaffolded instruction for an initial reading of the more complex features of this text:	
	ACT Features		Prior Knowledge – These essays reference the Holocaust and Auschwitz and the need for the accurate portrayal of events. The arguments may be confusing to students who lack prior knowledge of the Holocaust in general and of Auschwitz in particular. Students may need additional support to understand why the critics of <i>The Boy in the Striped Pajamas</i> are so opposed to the literary devices Boyne uses to tell his story.
			Connection of Ideas – Students read an excerpt of <i>The Boy in the Striped Pajamas</i> , but the arguments in the Point and Counterpoint essays reference events that occur in different places in the novel. To help students grasp the significance of the discussion of the boys meeting along the fence, for example, providing context will be helpful. In addition, Boyne does not mention the Holocaust or Auschwitz by name in the novel. Explaining the Holocaust, the pun of “OutWith” for Auschwitz, and the key idea of the novel as a fable will provide better context for both essays.
			Organization – The essays that comprise this text contain compare-and-contrast and cause-and-effect structures. In addition, the authors develop their ideas within these structures by drawing on quoted material from a variety of different sources. Students may need additional support to understand how these various elements are used to develop the arguments in the essays.
		Specific Vocabulary – Both writers use a number of direct quotes from experts. Some of the vocabulary in the quotes may challenge students. In instances where the text does not provide enough context to define the words, students will need to use a dictionary or other resource to determine each word meaning.	
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Excerpt Lexile®	1,130L	
	Full-text Lexile®	1,130L	
	Word Count	1,623	
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Arguments and Claims; Compare and Contrast	
	Close Read Prompt	Both essays focus on <i>The Boy in the Striped Pajamas</i> in discussing the role of fiction in teaching history. But the writers approach the book from different perspectives. Compare and contrast the perspectives. Which argument is more effective and persuasive? How might you suggest making it even stronger? Use textual evidence from both passages to support your response.	
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Argumentative	

Hitler Youth: Growing up in Hitler’s Shadow

AUTHOR	Name	Susan Campbell Bartoletti
	Gender	Female
	Nationality	American
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	2005
	Literature / Informational	Informational
	Genre	History
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	This excerpt from <i>Hitler Youth: Growing up in Hitler’s Shadow</i> provides an individual perspective about a historical event through the nonfiction narrative of a young German girl who is struggling with being an individual while being educated through the National Socialist education system. To help students understand Sophie’s experiences, as well as the sometimes brutish watch of the Hitler Youth who enforce the Nazi curriculum, use the following suggestions to provide more scaffolded instruction for the more complex features of this text:
	ACT Features	<p>Specific Vocabulary – Students will be unfamiliar with German words and concepts in this text that are specific to the Nazi Movement, including “Weltanschauung,” a term which refers to the Nazi worldview, and the “Bund Deutscher Mädel,” which was the female branch of the overall Nazi Party youth movement, the Hitler Youth. This branch was designed for girls over the age of fourteen. Girls between the ages of ten and fourteen joined the “Jungmädel.”</p> <p>Prior Knowledge – Students lacking awareness of the forces behind the rise of National Socialism in Germany after the worldwide stock market crash in 1929 may feel a lack of context for certain conditions described in the text, such as the tension between a group-mentality and an individual’s desire for freedom.</p> <p>Organization – The text opens with a focus on one person, Sophie, without completing her story, and moves on to discuss broader issues and other individuals. Students may be perplexed by the movement of the text and the lack of resolution regarding Sophie.</p>
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Excerpt Lexile®	1,010L
	Full-text Lexile®	1,050L
	Word Count	838
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Informational Text Elements; Reason and Evidence
	Close Read Prompt	What is the central or main idea in this excerpt from <i>Hitler Youth: Growing up in Hitler’s Shadow</i> ? What details does the author use to support this central idea? Use your understanding of informational text elements and reasons and evidence to determine the central idea that emerges in this passage. Support your writing with evidence from the text.
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Argumentative

Parallel Journeys

AUTHOR	Name	Eleanor Ayer
	Gender	Female
	Nationality	American
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1995
	Literature / Informational	Informational
	Genre	Biographies
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	Parallel Journeys provides readers with insight into the events of and surrounding Kristallnacht, or the Night of Broken Glass, when Nazis troops enacted a horrific, destructive pogrom against Jews, their communities, their churches, and their businesses in Wittlich. The story of Kristallnacht is told from the differing perspectives of a Hitler Youth witnessing Kristallnacht first-hand and a Jewish girl's second-hand account from the news of her family. In addition, an author's narration links these accounts. To help students understand the structure and different perspectives, use the following suggestions to provide scaffolded instruction for the more complex features of this text:
	ACT Features	<p>Organization – This excerpt begins with the first-hand account of Alfons Heck to show the brutish and violent actions taken by the Nazis on Kristallnacht, as well as the evil chaos that not only surrounded the community but was meant to be accepted and applauded by non-Jewish German citizens. The narrative then switches to a much more subtle yet no less impactful second-hand (second-hand, because the speaker was not present) account from Helen Waterford, explaining the confusion, fear, and helplessness of Jewish families as they were targeted and persecuted by Nazi forces. Though each account is different, each party is young, innocent of the overarching purpose of the events that are shaping them. Each section contains occasional third-person factual narrative to help frame the context. Some students may need additional support tracking each point of view.</p> <p>Specific Vocabulary – Students may be challenged by unfamiliar vocabulary. There are words and phrases specific to the Nazis regime and infrastructure (“SA and SS men, the Brownshirts and the Blackshirts,” “concentration camps,” “Buchenwald”) as well as German words (Kristallnacht, Schutzstaffel, Strasse, Schweinhunde, marks) and Jewish religious elements (synagogue, Torah) that may need clarification or explanation.</p> <p>Prior Knowledge – Students may need some clarification regarding the circumstances and main events of the Nazis movement. There must also be some kind of clarification regarding the reasons why children such as Alfons Heck (or adults, for that matter) could have possibly supported the Nazis.</p>
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Excerpt Lexile®	1,050L
	Full-text Lexile®	1,050L
	Word Count	1,155
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Informational Text Elements
	Close Read Prompt	What can you infer about Alfons and Helen, as adults, from their responses to the events described in Parallel Journeys by Eleanor Ayer? Use the informational text elements in this biographical account, including facts, opinions, historical details, and descriptive language to support your inferences. How can contributing to and reading historical accounts like this be useful for people today? Support your response with evidence from the text.
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Argumentative

Dear Miss Breed

AUTHOR	Name	Joanne Oppenheim
	Gender	Female
	Nationality	American
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	2006
	Literature / Informational	Informational
	Genre	Letters
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	<p>“Dear Miss Breed” presents letters written by children to librarian Clara Breed during the Japanese-American incarceration period of World War II. To help students understand the significance of the events experienced by the children who wrote these letters, use the following suggestions to provide scaffolded instruction for the more complex features of this text:</p> <p>Prior Knowledge – This text assumes that students will have prior knowledge about the Japanese air attack on Pearl Harbor during World War II, as well as the subsequent Japanese-American incarceration in internment camps across the western American states. Students may need additional support to understand the historical circumstances that resulted in the incarceration of the children featured in this text.</p>
	ACT Features	<p>Specific Vocabulary – The use of domain-specific words will most likely be unfamiliar to most students; for example, in this text, the term “Nikkei” refers to “Japanese migrants and their descendants.”</p> <p>Connection of Ideas – This text presents letters written to librarian Clara Breed, as well as background information by author Joanne Oppenheim about the circumstances experienced by the children who wrote the letters. Students may need additional support to understand how the author of the book has connected the letters to the historical information presented in the text.</p> <p>Purpose – Though this is a nonfiction text, the author uses narrative elements to chronicle the experiences of the children who sent letters to librarian Clara Breed. Students should examine the narrative-like descriptions and identify the author’s sympathetic point of view in telling the children’s stories.</p>
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Excerpt Lexile®	980L
	Full-text Lexile®	1,040L
	Word Count	1,746
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Media
	Close Read Prompt	Louise Ogawa, Babe Karasawa, Don Elberson, Chiyoko Morita, and Jack Watanabe all provide first-hand accounts of the relocation camp in Poston. What makes first-hand accounts of historical events more interesting and exciting than descriptions by people who weren’t present at the scene? How do first-hand accounts help you visualize places and events in the past in a way that second-hand accounts do not? Support your writing with evidence from the text.
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Argumentative

Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech

AUTHOR	Name	Elie Wiesel	
	Gender	Male	
	Nationality	Jewish-American	
	Translator		
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1986	
	Literature / Informational	Informational	
	Genre	Speech	
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	This excerpt from Elie Wiesel's "Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech" not only describes some of what Wiesel went through as a child in a Nazi concentration camp, but he also uses his experience to explain why he has dedicated his life to advocating for persecuted people around the world and speaking out against genocide and prejudice. To help students understand Wiesel's difficult experiences and life's purpose, use the following suggestions to provide more scaffolded instruction for the more complex features of this text:	
	ACT Features	Tone	Tone – Students may be challenged by the complexity of tone presented in this text. Wiesel's tone is a mixture of gratitude, sadness, imagination, strength, wisdom, determination, conscience, and moral goodness. Though humble, he forcefully argues for social justice and activism.
		Genre	Genre – Students may be challenged by the voice in this text. Even though this speech is nonfiction, Wiesel uses the narrative technique of allegory as he describes himself in the third person as "the boy", asking questions of his father about the end of "Night" (the Holocaust).
		Sentence Structure	Sentence Structure – Students unfamiliar with the rhetoric of speech may be confused by the structure of the text. Wiesel uses questions and answers to frame his purpose and gather energy towards his main point.
Prior Knowledge		Prior Knowledge – Students may be unfamiliar with the some of the allusions and poetic symbols in the text, such as Biblical allusions to sacrifice, and the elemental symbols of fire and night.	
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Excerpt Lexile®	780L	
	Full-text Lexile®	NA	
	Word Count	633	
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Media; Author's Purpose and Point of View	
	Close Read Prompt	How does the experience of reading the text of Elie Wiesel's "Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech" differ from the experience of watching the video of the speech? How do the visual and audio components of the video affect the message of the speech? Support your writing with evidence from both the video and the speech.	
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Informative/Explanatory	

Remarks in Memory of the Victims of The Holocaust

AUTHOR	Name	Ban Ki-Moon
	Gender	Male
	Nationality	South Korean
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	2013
	Literature / Informational	Informational
	Genre	Speech
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	This speech was delivered by United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon at the 2013 commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust at Park East Synagogue in New York City on January 12, 2013. In it, he discusses the persecution and genocide that took place during the Holocaust, but also global acts of violence and hatred in the late 20th and 21st centuries. To help students understand Ban’s message and the references he makes in this speech, use the following suggestions to provide more scaffolded instruction for the more complex features of this text:
	ACT Features	<p>Prior Knowledge – This speech assumes a level of prior knowledge that students may not have. For example, many may not be familiar with the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, which was created in 2013. Their mission is to work toward a more peaceful, more socially inclusive world by building mutual respect among peoples of different cultural and religious identities, highlighting the will of the world’s majority to reject extremism and embrace diversity. Students may also need additional support to understand the Syrian conflict, as well as the Srebrenica massacre, in which over 7,000 Bosnian Muslim boys and men were slain by Bosnian Serb forces and 20,000 civilians were removed from their homes. In addition, the names “Roma” and “Sinti” may be unfamiliar to many students. Most of the Gypsies in German-occupied Europe belonged to the Sinti and Roma tribes. Gypsies are believed to have arrived in Europe from northern India in the 1400s. They were called Gypsies because Europeans originally thought they came from Egypt.</p> <p>Connection of Ideas – Ban Ki-moon uses several aphorisms in his speech, such as “The only way to build peace is to build bridges and break down walls” and “If you want revenge you should dig two graves.” Students may struggle to uncover the connotations in these sayings; they may need guidance in deciphering the non-literal meanings of some of Ban Ki-moon’s statements to connect ideas in this speech.</p>
	Excerpt Lexile®	1,010L
	Full-text Lexile®	NA
Word Count	1,166	
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Informational Text Structure
	Close Read Prompt	What details does Ban Ki-moon include to support his reasoning and purpose? Which details help create the tone of the speech? Use your understanding of informational text structure to determine how details in this speech support Ban Ki-moon's point of view. Include text evidence from the speech to support your response.
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Informative/Explanatory



UNIT 3: A MORAL COMPASS

Grade 8 Unit 3 continues to develop students' grade level goal of proficiently reading and comprehending stories, poems, and literary nonfiction "in the grades 6-8 text complexity band (as measured by the Lexile® Framework), with scaffolding as needed in the high end of the range." This unit is anchored by a wide variety of literary texts, including short stories (3), novel excerpts (2), and poems (4), arranged to explore the role that life experiences have in shaping human values. The informational texts, including a personal essay and an argument in the form of a point/counterpoint, explore real-life considerations of the same unit theme. The qualitative dimensions, reader characteristics, and task demands of the selections in this unit make it an accessible but appropriately challenging set of texts for eighth grade readers as they move up the staircase of increasing complexity for the recommended quantitative dimensions (as measured by the Lexile® Framework) for Grades 6-8.

The literary selections in this unit address increasingly sophisticated themes, both comic and serious, as their protagonists encounter a range of experiences. As the unit progresses and the points of view change, the life experience and cultural knowledge demands increase. The unit opens with the Julia Ortiz Cofer short story, "Abuela Invents the Zero," a contemporary look at the cultural divide between first generation immigrant adolescents and their grandparents. The exploration of this theme continues with the classic Anton Chekhov story, "Home," which takes the perspective of a parent, and the Langston Hughes poem "Mother to Son." These diverse pieces place high demands on students' cultural literacy, including knowledge of dialect and specific vocabulary, as well as knowledge of the writing forms, so scaffolding is provided to help students access prior knowledge and build appropriate background to support an understanding of the qualitative dimensions. Two Common Core Appendix B text exemplars, Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* and Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, provide further quantitative and qualitative challenges for students, and the Gary Soto story "Born Worker," with its allusions to Twain, challenges students to explore intertextual references. Through the William Blake poem "The Little Boy Lost/The Little Boy Found," students learn how Biblical allusions can add depth to the moral questions Blake raises. Skills lessons guide students to analyze the texts in order to understand a range of concepts including theme, plot, character, point of

view, and genre, as well as the way film changes a work of literature, and the effect of language (including dialect) on meaning and tone. Blast lessons explore the role of folklore and the use of verbal irony in the work of Mark Twain, which is especially important since *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* is the recommended full-text read for this unit. These task demands, combined with the complex intertextual references, make the literary texts meaningful, challenging selections for students. First Read lessons provide vocabulary and grammar support.

Informational texts in the unit include a memoir by Rudolfo Anaya, “A Celebration of Grandfathers,” which offers a counterpoint to the Ortiz Cofer story, exploring a different perspective on the grandparents of the “old world”. To complete the exploration of moral decisions and personal values, the unit closes at the higher end of the text complexity band with a well-developed argument for both sides of a contemporary issue, the effort to make volunteering a requirement for high school graduation. Skills lessons guide students to analyze the unit’s informational texts for the central or main idea, the author’s point of view and purpose, as well as reasons and evidence. Students will also learn to examine conflicting evidence as they tie together the complexities of the moral questions raised in the selections.

Abuela Invents the Zero

AUTHOR	Name	Judith Cofer Ortiz
	Gender	Female
	Nationality	American
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1996
	Literature / Informational	Literature
	Genre	Short Story
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	In “Abuela Invents the Zero,” Constancia and her family are paid a visit by her grandmother (abuela) from Puerto Rico. Constancia is embarrassed by her grandmother’s appearance and her behavior at mass. When Constancia neglects to help her grandmother, Abuela is deeply hurt, and Constancia gets in trouble with her parents. To help students better understand the characters and cultural context, use the following ideas to provide scaffolded instruction for an initial reading of the more complex features of this text.
		Purpose - Readers need to recognize that on the surface, the story appears to be humorous and entertaining, but actually is meant to teach a moral or lesson.
	ACT Features	<p>Organization - Students need to recognize that the story starts with the ending, and then returns to that same point later in the story.</p> <p>Specific Vocabulary - The story features Spanish words which some readers may not be familiar with, though these are mostly defined in the text. Point out that the use of Spanish helps identify the culture, as well as the cultural friction between the narrator and her grandmother. Most of the time the author translates for readers, as when she writes, in the fourth paragraph, “el Polo Norte, as she calls New Jersey, the North Pole.” Sometimes, however, students will have to use context clues to figure out the meaning of certain Spanish words and phrases if they are not fluent in the language. For example, in the ninth paragraph, when her father says to Constancia, “The mass in Spanish is at ten sharp tomorrow morning, entiendes?”, students should take the question format as a clue that entiendes means understand.</p>
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Excerpt Lexile®	970L
	Full-text Lexile®	970L
	Word Count	1,583
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Theme; Character
	Close Read Prompt	How does the theme of “Abuela Invents the Zero” help you understand a larger lesson about how life experiences can shape our values? Use the details you have compiled from examining the conflict between the characters, as well as the characters’ thoughts, dialogue, feelings, and actions, to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify the theme of the story • analyze how it is developed over the course of the text Remember to support your writing with evidence and inferences from the text.
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Informative/Explanatory

AUTHOR	Name	Anton Chekhov
	Gender	Male
	Nationality	Russian
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1887
	Literature / Informational	Literature
	Genre	Short Story
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	Anton Chekhov's short story, "Home," tells of a situation in which a father must punish his young son for sneaking tobacco out of his study and smoking. The father, however, realizes that he does not know how to talk to his son, and is not even able to get his point across let alone provide any punishment. To help students better understand the text's humor and cultural points, use the following ideas to provide scaffolded instruction for an initial reading of the more complex features of this text.
	ACT Features	Connection of Ideas - The format of a short story is a condensed novel format so many ideas flow through the narrative. The author threads these ideas throughout the text and uses the father's inner thoughts to connect them. Help students break down the text and point out that what is important for them to take from this is not the fact that Seryozha interprets a whistle in his drawing as a spiral thread, or that he paints the letter L yellow. Chekhov is using these small details as examples to show that Yevgeny is slowly realizing he must approach teaching Seryozha a lesson in terms that his son can understand. The boy, due to his young age, has his own way of analyzing and approaching things. He has his own logic.
		Sentence Structure - Sentences containing multiple clauses might present a challenge to readers.
		Specific Vocabulary - Some difficult vocabulary may present a challenge to readers. Terms such as headmaster, governess, and other terms that pertain to upper-class Russian life may need to be defined. The Russian names of characters in the story, such as Seryozha, Natalya Semyonovna, and the main character, Yevgeny Petrovitch Bykovsky, may be difficult for students to pronounce. The thirteenth paragraph contains a sentence in French that is not translated for students. Explain that the governess is telling Seryozha that his father is calling him, and he should move quickly. You may wish to point out that this phrase in French is textual evidence allowing students to infer that, even at age 7, Seryozha is receiving lessons in foreign language.
Prior Knowledge - Students may not be familiar with Anton Chekhov, Russian life in the 1900s, and the short story format.		
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Excerpt Lexile®	1,020L
	Full-text Lexile®	1,020L
	Word Count	3,710
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Character
	Close Read Prompt	Yevgeny Petrovitch Bykovsky states that he achieves an understanding of life from sermons and laws, not from fables, novels, and poems. How does he change throughout the story? Write an essay of least 300 words explaining how he moves from logic to the use of stories and fairy tales as he attempts to reason with his son. Use textual evidence from the story to support your ideas.
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Informative/Explanatory

A Celebration of Grandfathers

AUTHOR	Name	Rudolfo Anaya
	Gender	Male
	Nationality	American
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1983
	Literature / Informational	Informational
	Genre	Essay
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	In his essay “A Celebration of Grandfathers,” author Rudolfo Anaya explores the contributions of the ancianos—“the old ones”—and the need for society to respect the elderly and the process of aging. To help students uncover the deeper meanings of the essay, use the following ideas to provide scaffolded instruction for an initial reading of the more complex features of this text:
	ACT Features	<p>Connection of Ideas – Anaya combines a remembrance of his childhood, a commentary on the values his grandfather’s generation, and a critique of modern societal values in his essay. Students may need help seeing how these three perspectives work together to deliver Anaya’s central ideas.</p> <p>Specific Vocabulary - The author uses many Spanish words, such as abuelos and abuelitas, ancianos, and curandera, that are not translated. Non-Spanish speakers will need to use context clues, the assistance of Spanish speakers, or Spanish–English dictionaries to determine meanings.</p> <p>Prior Knowledge – Anaya makes many geographic references to the Rio Grande region and many cultural references to his Mexican heritage. Some students may lack sufficient background to understand. Anaya devotes much of the essay to memories of his grandfather, carrying the old man’s story through to his death at ninety-four, transformed by crippling pain and a crumbling body.</p> <p>Organization - The essay lacks any internal structure other than paragraphs. Given the length of the essay, some students may be challenged by the lack of headings to help organize or highlight Anaya’s ideas.</p>
	Excerpt Lexile®	960L
	Full-text Lexile®	960L
Word Count	2,559	
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Central or Main Idea
	Close Read Prompt	How does the central or main idea that the author has advanced in “A Celebration of Grandfathers” help you understand the author’s purpose for writing this essay? How does his use of personal memories help to make his purpose clear? Use your understanding of supporting details and ideas to explain how the author builds up a central or main idea in the essay. Support your writing with evidence from the text.
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Informative/Explanatory

Mother to Son

AUTHOR	Name	Langston Hughes
	Gender	Male
	Nationality	American
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1922
	Literature / Informational	Literature
	Genre	Poem
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	On the surface, “Mother to Son” presents a mother’s advice to her son. The mother uses the metaphor of climbing up a rough set of stairs to demonstrate to her son that life is difficult, but that giving up is not an option. Hughes’s message is much broader, though. The mother speaks not only about herself but African Americans in general. To help students understand the cultural context of the poem, use the following ideas to provide scaffolded instruction for an initial reading of the more complex features of this text:
	ACT Features	<p>Specific Vocabulary – Hughes wrote “Mother to Son” in dialect. Words like l’se, a-climbin’, and landin’s may be difficult for some students. Point out the contraction, “l’se.” Explain that this is African American vernacular English. The standard “I have,” or “I’ve,” has changed to “I has,” or “I’se.” Point out that this dialect came about as a result of traditions followed since the earliest Africans were brought to America and began learning English. As with all communities, as circumstances, education, and locations change, dialect changes, too.</p> <p>Connection of Ideas – Hughes used the metaphor of a staircase for the struggle that the speaker—and Africans Americans in general—faced. The “crystal stair” is most likely an allusion to Jacob’s ladder, the biblical story of a stairway to heaven. The mother says, “Life for me ain’t been no crystal stair”—meaning it has not been a beautiful stairway to a better life. Instead, her stairs have been twisted and turning, torn up, bare, and covered with tacks and splinters. Students may have difficulty understanding that the speaker is saying that she has struggled to make a better life for herself and that the struggle is not over, but she won’t give up.</p> <p>Genre – Hughes wrote this poem when he was 21, during the Harlem Renaissance. It is written in free verse and was influenced by the poet’s love of African spirituals, jazz, and blues music. Students’ appreciation of the poem might be enhanced by background on these influences.</p>
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Excerpt Lexile®	NA
	Full-text Lexile®	NA
	Word Count	99
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Tone
	Close Read Prompt	Write an objective summary of the poem “Mother to Son,” including its theme or message. Explain how the author creates a specific tone using figurative language and dialect to convey this message. Then compare and contrast the poem with the structure and theme of another text you have read in this unit, such as “Home” or “Abuela Invents the Zero.” Analyze how the differing structure of each text contributes to its meaning and style. Support your writing with evidence from both texts.
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Informative/Explanatory

Little Women

AUTHOR	Name	Louisa May Alcott
	Gender	Female
	Nationality	American
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1869
	Literature / Informational	Literature
	Genre	Novel
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	These excerpt from Little Women introduce the four very different March sisters—Meg, Jo, Beth, and Amy. The plot centers around two potentially transforming event. In Chapter 1, the girls decide to use money that they had planned to spend on gifts for themselves to buy their mother Christmas presents. In Chapter 2, at their mother’s urging, the girls give their Christmas breakfast to a poor family of German immigrants. To help students understand the plot and how events affect the characters, use the following ideas to provide scaffolded instruction for an initial reading of the more complex features of this text:
	ACT Features	<p>Organization – Little Women is told from a third-person point of view. However, in these excerpts from Chapters 1 and 2, Louisa May Alcott primarily uses dialogue, rather than narration, to reveal each sister’s character and emphasize differences and to introduce problems to move the plot along. To understand the plot and determine how the characters respond to problems, students will need to analyze the dialogue.</p> <p>Specific Vocabulary – The novel was published in 1869 and is set during the Civil War. Consequently, some of language may be unfamiliar to students. For example, Jo calls Amy “a trump”—meaning a very good or admirable person—when Amy exchanges the small bottle of perfume for a larger one. Students may need assistance with the language.</p> <p>Genre – Little Women is a historical novel with four young sisters as the main characters. Some students may have difficulty placing the story in historical context, thus making the sisters seem naïve and quaint. This could make it more difficult for students to understand Alcott’s themes of the struggle between family duty and personal growth or the transformative power of giving. In addition some readers, as the StudySync episode illustrates, may view the novel as best suited for younger girls.</p>
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Excerpt Lexile®	1,050L
	Full-text Lexile®	1,300L
	Word Count	1,526
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Plot
	Close Read Prompt	In this excerpt from Little Women, how do the similarities and differences of the four March sisters help propel the plot? Explain the similarities and differences between each of these characters, and then explain how they affect the events of the plot. Use dialogue and other details from the text to support your statements about both characters and plot events.
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Argumentative

*The Adventures of Tom Sawyer (Chapter 2)

AUTHOR	Name	Mark Twain	
	Gender	Male	
	Nationality	American	
	Translator		
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1876	
	Literature / Informational	Literature	
	Genre	Novel	
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	In this excerpt from <i>The Adventures of Tom Sawyer</i> , Tom cooks up a scheme to get others to do the work of whitewashing his Aunt Polly's fence. Through third-person omniscient narration and clever dialogue, Twain entertains his readers while teaching them a lesson about human nature. Use the following ideas to provide scaffolded instruction for an initial reading of the more complex features of this text:	
	ACT Features		Organization - The novel is narrated from the third-person omniscient point of view. Students are asked to determine the point of view and then analyze how using a third-person omniscient point of view allows Twain to create certain effects such as humor or suspense. In addition, students are asked to consider how using a third-person omniscient point of view allows the author to reveal not only what Tom Sawyer has learned from his experience, but also a general rule about human behavior. To do this, students will need to carefully analyze details in the story.
			Genre - Students are asked to compare and contrast the print excerpt with a film version of the whitewashing scene and evaluate the effects the different forms have on the story. To understand what is lost and gained in each version, students have to identify and analyze relevant details and make inferences about what they see, hear, and read.
		Specific Vocabulary - Twain uses a number of multiple-meaning and unfamiliar words and phrases that that will challenge students. For example, in the first paragraph, the author uses the phrase <i>straitened means</i> to mean "limited financial resources." In paragraph 2, Twain writes, "Ben Rogers hove in sight presently." Here Twain is using the nautical term <i>hove</i> to mean "moved into a certain position." Students will need to use context clues or dictionaries to determine meanings. In addition, Twain uses idioms and other figures of speech, such as "up a stump," meaning "in a situation too difficult to manage," which may challenge students. Certain phrases have passed out of common usage, or have changed meaning, since Twain wrote <i>Tom Sawyer</i> . In the 29th paragraph, for example, the phrase "By the time Ben was fagged out . . ." means "By the time Ben was exhausted."	
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Excerpt Lexile®	1,070L	
	Full-text Lexile®	950L	
	Word Count	1,233	
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Point of View; Media	
	Close Read Prompt	Dramatic irony occurs when the words and actions of the characters in a work of literature have a different meaning for the reader than they do for the characters. This happens when readers have more knowledge about what its taking place than the characters themselves. How does Mark Twain use dramatic irony to create humor in <i>The Adventures of Tom Sawyer</i> ? Use evidence from the story to support your response.	
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Informative/Explanatory	

*Suggested Full-text Study

Born Worker

AUTHOR	Name	Gary Soto
	Gender	Male
	Nationality	American
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1998
	Literature / Informational	Literature
	Genre	Short Story
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	In “Born Worker,” Gary Soto juxtaposes two very different characters. José is a hard-working young man, while his cousin Arnie is all talk and no work. The two characters drive the plot forward with their differing views on life and responsibility. Although Soto writes with a casual tone and accessible vocabulary, students may need additional support to grasp the deeper meaning of the story. Use the following ideas to provide scaffolded instruction for an initial reading of the more complex features of this text:
	ACT Features	Organization - “Born Worker” has a character-driven story structure. José, the protagonist, is the “born worker” of the title. His cousin Arnie is the antagonist, a fast-talking liar who uses José work ethic for his own gain. The interplay between the two characters and the reactions of each to events in the story drive the plot forward. Students need to compare and contrast how the main characters behave, think, and feel to grasp the meaning of the story.
		Connection of Ideas - In “Born Worker,” Gary Soto makes several allusions to Mark Twain’s The Adventures of Tom Sawyer. The character of Arnie Sanchez, like Tom Sawyer in Twain’s novel, draws on the trickster archetype by sweet-talking, conning, and charming others in order to get what he wants. Students may need assistance making the connection between the two stories.
	Purpose - Gary Soto’s purpose is to entertain, but like Twain, he also wants to deliver a message about life and human nature. Some students will need support to see that Soto wants readers to take away from the story the lesson that tricksters may profit from their shenanigans, but being a hard worker and a good person is much more important.	
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Excerpt Lexile®	970L
	Full-text Lexile®	970L
	Word Count	3,445
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Story Structure; Allusion
	Close Read Prompt	Read the excerpt from The Adventures of Tom Sawyer in the StudySync library. Think about how both Tom Sawyer and Arnie Sanchez represent the trickster, a deceptive character who acts in a way that opposes conventional behavior. Write a short essay in which you compare and contrast Tom and Arnie. Why is Tom more likable than Arnie? Cite evidence from both texts to support your response.
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Informative/Explanatory

Ode to Thanks

AUTHOR	Name	Pablo Neruda
	Gender	Male
	Nationality	Chilean
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1995
	Literature / Informational	Literature
	Genre	Poem
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	Like the title implies, Pablo Neruda’s poem “Ode to Thanks” falls into the genre of poems called odes—lyric poems that use in an exaggerated style of praise to address a subject. Use the following ideas to provide scaffolded instruction for a close reading of the more complex features of this text:
	ACT Features	<p>Genre –Neruda structures “Ode to Thanks” as free verse. Line lengths vary, and there is no rhyme scheme or regular meter. Some students may find the structure confusing and hard to read aloud.</p> <p>Sentence Structure - Neruda uses the word thanks in different ways. To understand his specific intent, students have to look at the placement of the word in the line of poetry and at the text treatment. In the first stanza, for example, the poet writes, “Thanks to the word / that says thanks! / Thanks to thanks, / word / that melts / iron and snow!” Neruda italicizes the word when he is referring to the concept and sets the word in roman when he is using it to represent praise.</p> <p>Specific Vocabulary - Neruda uses a great deal of figurative and connotative language in his poem. Students will need to consider the connotations of Neruda’s word choices and what the personifications and similes add to the meaning of the poem.</p>
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Excerpt Lexile®	NA
	Full-text Lexile®	NA
	Word Count	228
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Poetic Structure
	Close Read Prompt	In “Ode to Thanks,” how does poet Pablo Neruda invite readers to appreciate the concept of gratitude? In an essay of at least 300 words, explain how figurative language, connotative meanings, and other aspects of poetic structure help you understand the poem’s message. If you were to write your own ode in the style of Pablo Neruda, what would you praise, and why?
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Informative/Explanatory

The Little Boy Lost / The Little Boy Found

AUTHOR	Name	William Blake
	Gender	Male
	Nationality	English
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1789
	Literature / Informational	Literature
	Genre	Poem
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	These two poems from William Blake's Songs of Innocence present images of a little boy lost in the dark, then found. Yet the poetic language suggests that Blake had more on his mind than telling a straightforward story. To get the most out of this selection, students will need to keep in mind the differences between poetry and other genres in the way language is used to achieve the aims of the author. Students will also find it helpful to focus on the organization of the text, especially the way the two brief poems mirror one another, as well as the connections of ideas within the poems.
	ACT Features	<p>Genre - The language of the poems are suggestive. Blake creates strong images and calls to mind deep feelings, but the language also carries a sense of mystery and meaning that go beyond the bare words of the poems. In this, the selection is far different from what students will find in other genres, such informational nonfiction.</p> <p>Organization - The two poems that make up the selection mirror each other. In the first, a young boy is lost, in the second the boy is found. The deeper meanings of the poems reflect that basic structure.</p> <p>Connection of Ideas - The basic ideas behind the two poems, being lost and being found, are clearly connected. In the most literal meaning of the poems, a boy is lost at night, then found. Yet the poetry suggests deeper meanings of these connected ideas that students should consider.</p>
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Excerpt Lexile®	NA
	Full-text Lexile®	NA
	Word Count	114
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Figurative Language; Connotation and Denotation
	Close Read Prompt	The poems "The Little Boy Lost" and "The Little Boy Found" by William Blake are, on the surface, about a child's responses to being left behind by his father and returned to his mother, with God's help. Think about what the poet might be saying about earthly life and spiritual life through these events. How do the words "lost" and "found" help develop the poems' themes? Use your understanding of figurative language and connotative meanings, as well as other textual evidence, to support your analysis.
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Informative/Explanatory

A Poison Tree

AUTHOR	Name	William Blake
	Gender	Male
	Nationality	English
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1794
	Literature / Informational	Literature
	Genre	Poem
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	The poem “A Poison Tree” by William Blake is a first-person narrative poem that tells of the nature of anger, or wrath. The speaker is angry with a friend and this anger is resolved. However, when the speaker gets angry with an enemy, or foe, the anger is hidden and grows. The speaker nourishes this anger until a deadly apple grows and his enemy eats it and dies. Blake uses imagery, figurative language, and allusion to tell this seemingly simple tale. The language and themes of the poem may pose some challenges to students:
	ACT Features	<p>Organization - The poem is first-person narrative with powerful imagery and actions. There is a sense of chronological order as the speaker “grows” his shiny apple that will kill his enemy. The reader has to “read between the lines” to see the deep meaning in the poem. The poem appears very simple, but is complex in its meaning and images.</p> <p>Sentence Structure - The text is arranged in a poetic structure that uses poetic elements such as meter and rhyme. The sentences also contain symbolism. For example, some critics say the apple stands for Blake’s literary works, which he felt others had “stolen.”</p> <p>Specific Vocabulary - Some difficult vocabulary may present a challenge to readers.</p> <p>Prior Knowledge - Some readers may be unfamiliar with the use of the common or natural setting of a garden with evil implications; Blake employs strong imagery with allusions to the Garden of Eden throughout the poem.</p>
	Excerpt Lexile®	NA
	Full-text Lexile®	NA
Word Count	101	
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Allusion; Word Relationships
	Close Read Prompt	William Blake wrote “The Poison Tree” as part of a collection called Songs of Experience. What theme is most strongly present in “A Poison Tree”? Why is this poem a “song of experience”? Use textual evidence to explain your reasons and to support your claim. Include the poem’s word relationships and figurative language, as well as your understanding of allusion, in your evidence.
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Argumentative

Mandatory Volunteer Work for Teenagers

AUTHOR	Name	NA
	Gender	NA
	Nationality	NA (USA)
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	2014
	Literature / Informational	Informational
	Genre	Pro/Con Op-Ed
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	The text illustrates two clear viewpoints supported by textual evidence. However, both viewpoints also heavily rely on opinions and textual evidence that is subjective rather than factual. Should volunteer work be mandatory for teenagers is an emotional issue, so therefore the opinions are colored by the feelings of the two writers. Both writers also use future predictions of behavior that is more anecdotal research than factual. Some students may have difficulty in terms of comprehension:
	ACT Features	Purpose - The authors of this text have different purposes: one author believes that mandatory volunteer work for teens is beneficial while the other author believes that it should not be a mandatory part of current school curriculum as it will have a negative effect on teens. It may be challenging for some readers to understand both authors' purposes.
		Sentence Structure - Many of the sentences in this text are lengthy, compound-complex sentences.
	Specific Vocabulary - There are difficult vocabulary words that are specific to the world of volunteering and may be unfamiliar to students.	
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Excerpt Lexile®	1180L
	Full-text Lexile®	1180L
	Word Count	1,453
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Author's Purpose and Point of View; Reason and Evidence; Compare and Contrast
	Close Read Prompt	Mark Twain's narrator in The Adventures of Tom Sawyer shares many ideas on the idea of working and volunteering. In the two essays that make up Mandatory Volunteer Work for Teenagers, what is each writer's point of view on teen volunteerism? What can you infer about the writers' values from the reasons and evidence presented in the Point and the Counterpoint? Compare and contrast the way reasons and evidence are presented in the two essays. Which essay do you think makes the most convincing arguments? Use textual evidence to support your opinion.
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Argumentative



UNIT 4: THE CIVIL WAR

Grade 8 Unit 4 continues to develop students' grade level goal of proficiently reading and comprehending stories, poems, narrative nonfiction and informational texts "in the grades 6-8 text complexity band, with scaffolding as needed in the high end of the range." This unit is built around literary and informational texts devoted to the American Civil War. The selections are arranged to explore the role that life experiences have in shaping human values and include novel excerpts (2) and poems (2). The informational texts, including a memoir and an impassioned letter from a Union soldier to his wife, explore real-life considerations of the same unit theme. Three speeches, two by Abraham Lincoln and one by Sojourner Truth, help define the passions of the time period. The qualitative dimensions, reader characteristics, and task demands of the selections in this unit make it an accessible but appropriately challenging set of texts for eighth grade readers, as they move up the staircase of increasing complexity for the recommended quantitative dimensions (as measured by the Lexile® Framework) for Grades 6-8.

The unit blends historically significant speeches, serious debate, personal accounts, and historical fiction to provide students with a panoramic view of a defining moment in American history. The primary sources that anchor this final unit, including speeches, letters, and autobiographical accounts, represent text complexity that tracks toward the high end of the range. Intertextual references, as well as demands on the life experience and cultural and historical knowledge of young readers, can make both fiction and informational texts in this unit challenging for students. "Prior Knowledge" in the Access Complex Text feature in both the First Read and Close Read accompany selections such as Abraham Lincoln's "House Divided Speech" and an excerpt from the Common Core Exemplar text *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave*. The latter title is also the recommended full-text read for this unit. The First Read lessons accompanying selections with very high demand on prior historical knowledge, such as the excerpts from Irene Hunt's *Across Five Aprils* and Longfellow's poem "Paul Revere's Ride," a Common Core exemplar text written to inspire patriotic feelings in support of the Union on the verge of the Civil War, all feature Prior Knowledge scaffolding as well as extensive Build Background activities.

Prior Knowledge scaffolding as well as extensive Build Background activities can also be found in three of the informational texts that fall outside the quantitative Lexile dimensions for Grade 8, including Lincoln's

“Gettysburg Address,” an excerpt from Louisa May Alcott’s *Civil War Journal*, and a letter written by Union officer Sullivan Ballou to his wife. Each of these primary source accounts offer an important commentary on both the meaning of the Civil War and the personal feelings of those engaged in it. The Skills lessons that accompany these informational texts address the unit task demands for analyzing the role of different mediums to present information, identifying the main or central idea of a text and analyzing arguments and claims, and identifying the features of an informational text structure. These task demands, combined with the complex intertextual references, make these informational texts relevant and challenging for students.

The literary texts for this unit include the Stephen Crane classic *The Red Badge of Courage*, in which a young man’s romantic notions of battle are destroyed when he finally faces the real thing, as well as the aforementioned *Across Five Aprils*. While the quantitative dimensions of the excerpt from *The Red Badge of Courage* are lower than other selections in the unit, it is scaffolded to guide students to analyze its qualitative dimensions. Accompanying skill lessons address the unit task demands of identifying the author’s use of figurative language and analyzing theme. Combined with the complex intertextual references and rich historical context, these task demands make this literary text a meaningful, challenging selection for students.

The unit closes with Walt Whitman’s “O Captain! My Captain!”, an extended metaphor poem and a Common Core exemplar text on the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. The themes in this emotional poem echo the unit’s theme and mark a satisfying narrative endpoint for a unit that opens with “House Divided,” a speech that warns of a coming Civil War.

House Divided Speech

AUTHOR	Name	Abraham Lincoln	
	Gender	Male	
	Nationality	American	
	Translator		
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1858	
	Literature / Informational	Informational	
	Genre	Speech	
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	This excerpt from Lincoln's "House Divided" speech illustrates the building tension surrounding the issue of slavery. The speech uses moving and powerful language meant to sway audience members to act, and to act now. To help students understand the events leading up to the speech, use the following suggestions to provide more scaffolded instruction for the more complex features of this text:	
	ACT Features		Sentence Structure - The text is an excerpt from a formal speech. Formal speeches are targeted for a specific audience, and some students may not have experience reading speeches. Some students may also need help to understand the use of the punctuation in this excerpted speech. Point out that the apparent excessive use of commas and dashes are placed as an indication where Lincoln intended to pause for effect.
			Specific Vocabulary - Some difficult and archaic vocabulary, such as "mustered" or "dissevered," may present a challenge to students. Encourage them to use context clues to determine the meanings of these and other words. They may also consult general reference materials, both print and digital, to find the pronunciation of a word or to determine or clarify its exact meaning.
		Prior Knowledge - Although students will likely know Lincoln as a famous U.S. president, most students will not know that Lincoln was a candidate for the U.S. Senate from Illinois. His political position prior to becoming president makes the speech particularly intriguing and requires prior historical knowledge. Lincoln's goals with this speech were to differentiate himself from Stephen Douglas, the incumbent, and to publicly state a prediction for the future. Douglas had long been in favor of a plan under which the settlers in each new territory would decide on their own whether the territory would be admitted to the Union as a slave or a free state. He had repeatedly stated that this would end slavery-induced conflict, and would allow northern and southern states to resume their peaceful coexistence. Lincoln, however, responded that the Dred Scott decision of the previous year, in which the Supreme Court had ruled that even free African Americans could not become American citizens, had left the Union with only two remaining outcomes: the United States would inevitably become either all slave, or all free.	
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Excerpt Lexile®	1,110L	
	Full-text Lexile®	NA	
	Word Count	350	
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Informational Text Structure; Tone	
	Close Read Prompt	In the House Divided Speech, Abraham Lincoln wrote about an issue that he felt strongly about and that was very important to him. Write a short speech about a topic that is important to you, using specific word choice to convey tone. Choose an informational text structure that helps communicate and develop your ideas clearly in each paragraph. In your speech, include an allusion or image that you think conveys the situation in a powerful and memorable way.	
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Informative/Explanatory	

*Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave

AUTHOR	Name	Frederick Douglass
	Gender	Male
	Nationality	American
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1845
	Literature / Informational	Informational
	Genre	Autobiography
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	In this excerpt from Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, Frederick Douglass describes the efforts he made to learn how to read, and the impact that reading had on his life. Douglass's situation is embodied in the rich figurative language of the text. To help students understand the ideas expressed and inferred from this autobiography, use the following suggestions to provide scaffolded instruction for the more complex features of this text:
	ACT Features	Purpose
Organization		Organization - There are elements of both problem/solution and cause/effect in the text's structure. Students learn how Douglass solved his problem of not knowing how to read, as well as the effect learning how to read had on him.
		Connection of Ideas - The text makes a connection between knowledge as both a source of power and torment.
		Prior Knowledge - The text may be more challenging for readers without a background knowledge of slavery and the particular time in history in which the narrative is set. As the institution of slavery spread across the South, many states passed "slave codes," which outlined the rights of slaves and the "rules" regarding what was considered acceptable treatment. The education of slaves was prohibited. Anyone operating a school or teaching any African-American how to read and write in Missouri, for example, could be punished by a fine of not less than \$500 and up to six months in jail. The punishment and fines were even more severe in the antebellum South. A Virginia law, passed in the early 1830s, prohibited the teaching of all African Americans to read or write, whether they were free or not. Later laws even prohibited African Americans who went out of state to get an education from returning.
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Excerpt Lexile®	1,010L
	Full-text Lexile®	1,080L
	Word Count	945
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Informational Text Elements; Figurative Language
	Close Read Prompt	In some informational texts, authors try to persuade readers to accept a specific point of view about a subject. In what way does Frederick Douglass use elements of figurative language to express the anger and torment that he feels, and help readers understand it? How does the use of these figures of speech strengthen his argument against slavery? Use your understanding of figurative language and informational text elements to determine how successfully Douglass uses them in his narrative. Support your writing with evidence from the text.
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Informative/Explanatory

*Suggested Full-text Study

Across Five Aprils

AUTHOR	Name	Irene Hunt	
	Gender	Female	
	Nationality	American	
	Translator		
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1964	
	Literature / Informational	Literature	
	Genre	Novel	
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	This excerpt from <i>Across Five Aprils</i> illustrates the two distinct viewpoints Americans supported during the Civil War. At the core of the argument: has human nature evolved from the days when slavery was an acceptable practice in most ancient civilizations? The discussion between the family reflects the contrasting viewpoints as well as the challenges of the text. To help students understand the ideas expressed and inferred from this work of historical fiction, use the following suggestions to provide scaffolded instruction for the more complex features of this text:	
	ACT Features	Genre	Genre - Because this text is historical fiction, it has certain features and follows certain rules. In historical fiction, the plot takes place in a historical setting. It draws on factual information, but incorporates fictional elements.
		Sentence Structure	Sentence Structure - The dialogue, which contains a dialect, or the language used by the people of a specific area, class, or district, is sometimes difficult to understand and may present a challenge to readers. You may want to explain that dialect can be a powerful way to create the geographic and social background of a character. To help students understand the author's use of dialect in the story, suggest that they copy a section of dialogue and then rewrite it using "standard" English. You may also wish to help students translate certain lines of dialogue, such as in the fifth paragraph when Matthew Creighton asks his cousin, "Will Kaintuck go secesh, Wilse?" Point out that "Kaintuck" is dialect for Kentucky, and "secesh" is abbreviated dialect for the word "secession." Matthew is asking if his cousin thinks Kentucky will secede from the Union.
Specific Vocabulary		Specific Vocabulary - The author sometimes uses phonetic spelling when writing in dialect. It may require some readers to reread certain sections.	
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Excerpt Lexile®	1,060L	
	Full-text Lexile®	1,100L	
	Word Count	1,393	
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Point of View; Character	
	Close Read Prompt	Think about how the various characters in this excerpt from <i>Across Five Aprils</i> feels about the institution of slavery, and the prospect of civil war. Imagine what might happen if, as war is declared, Jethro Creighton announces to his family that he intends to enlist in the Union army. Establish a context and point of view and organize a sequence of events that unfolds naturally and logically after Jethro's announcement, based on the traits of the characters you have read about. How might Matt feel about Jethro's decision? Use your understanding of point of view and character traits in your narrative, as well as techniques such as dialogue, pacing, description, and reflection to develop experiences, events and the characters in your story.	
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Narrative	

Paul Revere's Ride

AUTHOR	Name	Henry Wadsworth Longfellow	
	Gender	Male	
	Nationality	American	
	Translator		
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1861	
	Literature / Informational	Literature	
	Genre	Poem	
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	The poem Paul Revere's Ride tells about an exciting time in American history, and the heroic efforts of Paul Revere, a hero of the American Revolution. The poem describes events as they unfold on the evening of April 18, 1775, as Paul Revere rides out from Boston to warn the colonists of approaching British soldiers. To help students understand the ideas expressed and inferred from this poem, use the following suggestions to provide scaffolded instruction for the more complex features of this text:	
	ACT Features	Purpose	Purpose - Longfellow showcases Revere as the only rider that night, who makes it all the way to Concord, warning everyone along the way. The underlying purpose of the poem is to inspire patriotic feelings in readers in the hopes that they will support the Union on the verge of the Civil War. "Paul Revere's Ride" was published on December 19, 1860, the day before South Carolina seceded from the Union.
		Genre	Genre - The poem blends elements of nonfiction, myth, and historical fiction. The basic premise of the poem is historically accurate, but Revere was not alone on his mission to warn John Hancock, Samuel Adams and other patriots that the British were approaching Lexington on that April evening in 1775. Two other men, William Dawes and Samuel Prescott, rode alongside him, and by the end of the night as many as 40 men on horseback were spreading the word across Boston's Middlesex County. Revere also never reached Concord, as the poem inaccurately recounts.
		Structure	Structure - The poem recounts events in chronological order. It also employs a rhyming structure that varies throughout the poem and may challenge readers. Longfellow introduces a brand new pattern of rhymes for almost every stanza. When determining a rhyme scheme for the poem, one option to consider is treating the rhyme scheme of each stanza separately, starting fresh with "a" and "b" after each break between sections of the poem. So the rhyme scheme for the first stanza is "aabba." Then, for the second stanza, it's "ababccddd."
Prior Knowledge	Prior Knowledge - Paul Revere founded the first patriot intelligence network on record. Prior to the American Revolution he had been a member of the Sons of Liberty, a political organization that opposed tax legislation such as the Stamp Act of 1765 and organized demonstrations against the British.		
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Excerpt Lexile®	NA	
	Full-text Lexile®	NA	
	Word Count	980	
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Figurative Language; Connotation and Denotation	
	Close Read Prompt	How does Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's use of language in "Paul Revere's Ride" set the tone for the events described in the poem? How does the poet use connotation and denotation to create visual images that add to the meaning of the poem? Use your understanding of figurative language as well as connotation and denotation to determine how the author's word choices impact meaning and tone. Support your writing with evidence from the text.	
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Informative/Explanatory	

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

AUTHOR	Name	Sojourner Truth
	Gender	Female
	Nationality	American
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1851
	Literature / Informational	Informational
	Genre	Speech
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	In the year 1851, at a women’s rights convention held in Akron, Ohio, an African American woman delivered a moving speech that would be long remembered for its rawness, authenticity, and powerful message. Sojourner Truth, a freed slave born in 1797, spoke about her experiences and ordeals not only as a woman but as a black woman. She used her personal experiences and Biblical references to connect with her audience and provoke them on both an emotional and personal level. Two reporters later gave different versions of the speech. In the first version, much of the vernacular language and dialect Truth used is preserved. In the second version of the speech, the grammar has been corrected. Both versions reflect the challenges of the text. To help students understand the ideas expressed and inferred from the two versions of this speech, use the following suggestions to provide scaffolded instruction for the more complex features of this text:
	ACT Features	<p>Prior Knowledge - The speech shows how different life was for African Americans and women in the United States before the abolition of slavery and the equal rights amendment. Students may have difficulty imagining the way these differences could influence every aspect of of a person’s life.</p> <p>Sentence Structure - Some complex sentences and long paragraphs may challenge students to locate text evidence to support their answers to teacher questions. The Access Path can guide students to find text evidence.</p> <p>Specific Vocabulary - There is some difficult vocabulary in Truth’s speech, as well as words and phrases that have passed out of the language or are examples of vernacular dialect. Phrases such as “gathered into barns” in the second paragraph, as well as “But what’s all this here talking about?” and “twixt the negroes of the South and the women at the North” in the first paragraph, may present a challenge to students.</p>
	Excerpt Lexile®	780L
	Full-text Lexile®	780L
Word Count	712	
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Compare and Contrast
	Close Read Prompt	Consider Sojourner Truth’s statement in the first account: “If my cup won’t hold but a pint, and yours holds a quart, wouldn’t you be mean not to let me have my little half measure full?” What does she mean by “cup, pint, and quart?” How does Robinson present this idea in the second account, and how is the meaning of Sojourner Truth’s statement changed slightly in Robinson’s account? Write an explanation of the analogies that Truth makes and compare and contrast the two accounts of the speech and how they present these analogies. Then write an answer to the second question, comparing the two presentations. Use textual evidence to support your answer.
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Informative/Explanatory

Sullivan Ballou Letter

AUTHOR	Name	Sullivan Ballou
	Gender	Male
	Nationality	American
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1861
	Literature / Informational	Informational
	Genre	Letter
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	Rhode Islander Sullivan Ballou was an officer in the Union Army during the Civil War. He wrote a loving and eloquent letter to his wife in July, 1861. In it, he describes the conflicting pull of a war which he believes is just and his love for his wife, whom he misses greatly. The letter reflects the language of the time and it is dense with feelings and emotions. To help students understand the ideas expressed and inferred in the letter, use the following suggestions to provide scaffolded instruction for the more complex features of this text:
	ACT Features	<p>Prior Knowledge - Sullivan Ballou's letter shows how important the Civil War was, and the conflict that many soldiers faced. They believed in the cause and were willing to fight, but they missed their families and longed for the war to end and to return home. Ballou devoted his brief life to public service. He was elected in 1854 as clerk of the Rhode Island House of Representatives, later serving as its speaker. He married Sarah Hart Shumway on October 15, 1855, and the following year saw the birth of their first child, Edgar. A second son, William, was born in 1859. Ballou immediately entered the military in 1861 after the war broke out and was 32 at the time of his death at the first Battle of Bull Run on July 21, 1861. When he died, his wife was 24. She later moved to New Jersey to live out her life with her son, William, and never re-married. She died at age 80 in 1917.</p> <p>Sentence Structure - Complex sentences and long paragraphs may challenge students to locate textual evidence to support their answers. The Access Path can guide students to find textual evidence.</p> <p>Specific Vocabulary - Some difficult vocabulary may present a challenge to readers. Certain words and phrases have either passed out of the language or are examples of dialect. For example, in the fourth paragraph, Ballou writes that his love of country bears him "unresistibly" on when he means "irresistibly." Help students to use context clues in order to understand these examples of vernacular language.</p>
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Excerpt Lexile®	1,200L
	Full-text Lexile®	NA
	Word Count	455
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Media
	Close Read Prompt	On the basis of the letter that Ballou wrote to his wife, do you think he feels that he led a good, fulfilling life? As you explain, use evidence from the text to support your response.
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Informative/Explanatory

Civil War Journal

AUTHOR	Name	Louisa May Alcott	
	Gender	Female	
	Nationality	American	
	Translator		
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1861-1863	
	Literature / Informational	Informational	
	Genre	Journal	
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	This excerpt from Alcott's Civil War Journal chronicles her experiences as a nurse during the Civil War. While the headings that indicate months and days help the reader to follow the sequence of events, the abbreviated style may prove challenging to some readers. However, they will probably quickly recognize it as the way they themselves write when they take notes or record events. To help students better follow Alcott's journal, use the following suggestions to provide more scaffolded instruction for the more complex features of this text:	
	ACT Features	Organization	The text is organized sequentially, with reflection and analysis in some entries. Point of view is solely the writer's, but point out to students that her thoughts, ideas, and concerns are jotted down in first draft, often without transitions. Readers will often have to make connections themselves..
		Sentence Structure	Sentence fragments and run-on sentences are characteristic of journal writing. Point out to students that such writing should not be judged as "finished" work meant for publication. As a result of Alcott's style, students may need support in completing the writer's sentences or thoughts.
		Specific Vocabulary	Casual references to places (Concord, Boston, Plymouth, Georgetown), people (May and Julian Hawthorne, for example), and events (including explanations of "parcels" and the need to buy a veil, for example, as well as a "ward" at this time) may require additional research for better understanding. Explain to students that sometimes terms or references may have to remain unexplained, but that they should infer as best they can to get a sense of Alcott's experiences.
	Prior Knowledge	Because the writer of a journal is usually writing for herself without an audience in mind, many aspects of Alcott's life and times will be unclear for students. For example, a military hospital of the 1860s may require visual support, which can be found on various historical websites. Remind students that short of research, they will have to use the descriptive details that Alcott provides to better visualize her experiences.	
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Excerpt Lexile®	1,370L	
	Full-text Lexile®	NA	
	Word Count	1,640	
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Informational Text Structure	
	Close Read Prompt	Consider the events that take place in Alcott's Civil War Journal. How do these events and the way they are presented help to indicate the text structure she employs in her writing? Give specific examples to support your answer.	
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Informative/Explanatory	

The Red Badge of Courage

AUTHOR	Name	Stephen Crane
	Gender	Male
	Nationality	American
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1895
	Literature / Informational	Literature
	Genre	Novel
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	The first part of this excerpt from Chapter 1 of <i>The Red Badge of Courage</i> shows Private Henry Fleming on the eve of his first battle, his living situation in the army camp, and his past dreams of military glory which led him there despite his mother's objections. His perspective changes sharply in the excerpt from Chapter 7, which takes place just after he has fled the battle, thinking his side has lost. When he realizes it was instead a victory, he feels a range of confusing and conflicting emotions about the army and about his own decision. To help students understand Crane's approach to this narrative, use the following suggestions to provide more scaffolded instruction for the more complex features of this text:
	ACT Features	<p>Connection of Ideas - The text suggests ideas about war, courage, and Private Henry Fleming's own feelings, which are sometimes implied rather than explicit. Point out that the narrative describes "the youth," or Henry, moment to moment in a time before, during, and after a battle. Explain that the narrative also uses flashback, or goes back in time, as Henry thinks about how he got to this point. These shifts may be challenging for some readers.</p> <p>Sentence Structure - Crane uses a variety of sentence lengths. Sentences containing multiple clauses might present a challenge to readers.</p> <p>Specific Vocabulary - Some difficult vocabulary may present a challenge to readers. Crane has a vast range of vocabulary, particularly in his descriptions. He makes distinctions, for example, between "secular" and "religious," which may require defining. In addition, vocabulary specific to the war may need to be defined.</p> <p>Prior Knowledge - Details of the American Civil War, of battle and of army life will be unfamiliar to some readers. Crane provides vivid details about a soldier's experience, but certain battle terms, such as "musketry," might need explanation.</p>
	Excerpt Lexile®	900L
	Full-text Lexile®	900L
Word Count	1,328	
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Figures of Speech; Theme
	Close Read Prompt	How does the point of view Stephen Crane uses in <i>The Red Badge of Courage</i> help you understand the thoughts, reactions, and feelings of Private Henry Fleming? How does the use of personification contribute to the text? Use your understanding of point of view and personification to determine the themes that emerge in this excerpt. Support your writing with evidence from the text.
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Informative/Explanatory

Gettysburg Address

AUTHOR	Name	Abraham Lincoln
	Gender	Male
	Nationality	American
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1863
	Literature / Informational	Informational
	Genre	Speech
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	This speech, known as the Gettysburg Address, allows then President Abraham Lincoln the opportunity to show respect at Gettysburg, the battle site that suffered the most casualties during the Civil War. Lincoln speaks of the promise that the nation's founding fathers established regarding equality. He asks his audience not only to remember all who gave their lives in order to fight for equality, but to continue the fight so that their deaths were truly meaningful. To help students follow Lincoln's famous speech, use the following suggestions to provide more scaffolded instruction for the more complex features of this text:
	ACT Features	<p>Vocabulary - Some words and phrases are archaic and unfamiliar, which may present a challenge to readers, as the understanding of these words is critical to unpacking information in the text.</p> <p>Background Knowledge - This speech references a specific battle in the Civil War, as well as ideals established by the Founding Fathers, that may be unfamiliar to some students.</p> <p>Connection of Ideas - While students may have knowledge about the Civil War and the American Revolution in a general sense, the reason for the connection Lincoln makes between the two might not be immediately apparent. Point out to students that the events were less than 90 years apart.</p>
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Excerpt Lexile®	1,250L
	Full-text Lexile®	1,250L
	Word Count	264
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Argument and Claim; Central or Main Idea
	Close Read Prompt	Choose one paragraph of the Gettysburg Address. What is the main idea of the paragraph? How does this main idea tie to a larger argument Lincoln is making throughout the entire speech? Focus specifically on the structure of the paragraph and how the sentences in the paragraph build on each other to convey the main idea. Respond in an argumentative essay of 300 words. Support your ideas with evidence from the text.
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Informative/Explanatory

Chasing Lincoln's Killer

AUTHOR	Name	James Swanson
	Gender	Male
	Nationality	American
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	2009
	Literature / Informational	Informational
	Genre	Informational
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	This excerpt from Chasing Lincoln's Killer describes the days leading up to Abraham Lincoln's assassination through the eyes of John Wilkes Booth, the actor turned assassin. This excerpt outlines Booth's missed opportunities and resulting frustration over the course of several days as he plots how and when he will have the appropriate opportunity to kill the president. To help students follow the narrative of events, use the following suggestions to provide more scaffolded instruction for the more complex features of this text:
	ACT Features	<p>Specific Vocabulary - Some difficult vocabulary, including multiple-meaning words, theater vocabulary, and period references, may require definitions for readers.</p> <p>Connection of Ideas - The author puts an emphasis on Booth's thoughts and actions in sequence, but the shift in point of view, including the choice to "go inside" Booth's head, may present challenges.</p> <p>Organization - This excerpt transitions from the prologue to Chapter 1, and the first chapter recalls dates and times from the prologue. This text structure may be challenging for some readers. The insertion of quoted material, historical dates, and place descriptions that accompany the chronology may require explanation.</p>
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Excerpt Lexile®	1,110L
	Full-text Lexile®	980L
	Word Count	1,248
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Textual Evidence
	Close Read Prompt	In this excerpt of Chasing Lincoln's Killer, how does the author's focus on John Wilkes Booth affect the way the events are developed? Why do you think the author takes this approach? In your analysis, include evidence that is explicitly stated, as well as inferences you draw from the text. Include textual evidence to support your inferences.
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Informative/Explanatory

O Captain! My Captain!

AUTHOR	Name	Walt Whitman	
	Gender	Male	
	Nationality	American	
	Translator		
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1865	
	Literature / Informational	Literature	
	Genre	Poem	
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	The poem “O Captain! My Captain!” uses figurative language to convey the author’s message and to reflect the feelings of a nation about their beloved leader. The ideas expressed in the poem must be viewed in the context of Abraham Lincoln’s role leading America through the struggles of the Civil War, and his violent death after victory had been won. To help students understand Whitman’s use of poetry to discuss a historic event, use the following suggestions to provide more scaffolded instruction for the more complex features of this text:	
	ACT Features	Purpose	Purpose - Because the author’s purpose involves an emotional message rather than literal meaning, some students may need help with the poem’s use of extended metaphor.
		Genre	Genre - Since poetry uses figurative language to convey meaning and emotion, some students may need support in understanding the form.
		Specific Vocabulary	Specific Vocabulary - Some difficult vocabulary, including contractions, colloquialisms, and period language, may present a challenge to readers.
Prior Knowledge		Prior Knowledge - Students must have background knowledge of Abraham Lincoln and the Civil War to understand this poem in the proper context.	
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Excerpt Lexile®	NA	
	Full-text Lexile®	NA	
	Word Count	207	
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Connotation and Denotation; Figurative Language; Poetic Structure	
	Close Read Prompt	Walt Whitman uses an extended metaphor in “O Captain! My Captain!” to make a comparison between a ship and its captain with a nation and its head of state. Use your understanding of extended metaphor to write a short narrative about an event or a person that you feel deserves a tribute, and how you might use an extended metaphor to write it. Then write one or two stanzas of a poem using this metaphor. Decide on a poetic structure that suits your topic, and use your understanding of connotation and denotation to highlight and emphasize the meaning of the poem.	
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Narrative	

ELA Grade Level Overview Grade 8

Writing

Overall Approach to Writing Instruction

StudySync instructs students on a variety of writing forms that adhere to the CA CCSS for ELA. Each unit of the program exposes students to a different writing form and all of its associated skills and processes, which they practice through unit-specific Extended Writing Projects (EWP). At each grade level, one EWP covers each of the following writing forms: narrative, informative/explanatory, literary analysis, and argumentative writing.

Direct instruction in writing includes reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language lessons and activities, all of which are scaffolded to support learners of varying backgrounds and abilities. Writing activities in each unit, from the in-depth Extended Writing Project to the shorter writing prompts and online Blast responses, explore different aspects of the writing process, giving students a variety of writing practice opportunities to hone their skills and enhance their understanding of each unit's particular writing form. This application of the writing skills and processes culminates in the Extended Writing Project, which challenges students and holds them accountable to their learning experiences. Students write reflective pieces, short constructed responses, immediate response pieces, and pieces that require summary and exploration of both literary and informative readings. They evaluate and assess Student Model examples that connect to the modes of writing in each unit. Lessons push students to effectively express themselves and rely on textual evidence as a basis of support for their ideas. Students have a range of opportunities to enrich their writing, including immersion in specific academic vocabulary, peer review and revision, and group discussion and collaboration. They explore different formats of presenting and publishing the finished works that represent their best possible writing efforts in the program.

WRITING TASK CHART

		UNIT 1	UNIT 2	UNIT 3	UNIT 4
		Suspense! What attracts us to stories of suspense?	In Time of War: What does our response to conflict say about us?	A Moral Compass: How can life experiences shape our values?	The Civil War: How did the War Between the States redefine America?
EXTENDED WRITING PROJECT	Writing Form	Narrative	Argumentative	Literary Analysis	Informative/Explanatory
	Prompt	You have been reading and learning about stories of suspense, in addition to studying techniques authors use to generate a feeling of suspense in readers. Now you will use those techniques to write your own suspenseful narrative based on real or imagined experiences and events.	Carefully consider the selections you have read in this unit, including their themes and the ideas they offer about war and conflict. Pick two of the selections from the unit and write an argumentative essay that presents a claim in answer to the following question: how can people best respond to conflict? Along with information from the selections, include research from at least three other credible print and digital sources to support your claim and develop your argument.	As the selections you have read in this unit show, people are shaped by their individual life experiences. People make choices, some of which are mistakes, but they often learn and grow from their experiences. Choose two selections from this unit and think about the main character or the narrator in each one. What does the main character or narrator value most, and how do the characters' experiences shape or even change their values? Write a literary analysis that shows how personal experience can change people for better or sometimes for worse.	The Civil War was a turning point in American history, one that helped define who Americans are today. Why did so many people feel it was necessary to fight? How did their efforts help redefine what it means to be an American? Write an informative essay analyzing how the Civil War changed Americans and their ideas about freedom. Use ideas and information expressed in at least two unit texts to reinforce your analysis.
	Student Model	"The Silver Box"	"Attitude: One Secret to Survival"	"Personal Experiences: The Pathway to Values"	"The Meaning of Freedom"
	Process Steps	Prewrite; Plan; Draft; Revise; Edit, Proofread, and Publish	Prewrite; Plan; Draft; Revise; Edit, Proofread, and Publish	Prewrite; Plan; Draft; Revise; Edit, Proofread, and Publish	Prewrite; Plan; Draft; Revise; Edit, Proofread, and Publish
	Writing Skills	Organize Narrative Writing; Introductions; Narrative Techniques and Sequencing; Descriptive Details (Blast); Writing Dialogue; Audience and Purpose (Blast); Conclusions; Transitions	Audience, Purpose, and Style (Blast); Research and Note-Taking; Thesis Statement; Organize Argumentative Writing; Supporting Details; Introductions and Conclusions; Transitions (Blast); Sources and Citations	Thesis Statement; Audience and Purpose (Blast); Organize Argumentative Writing; Supporting Details; Introductions; Transitions (Blast); Conclusions; Style; Sources and Citations	Thesis Statement; Audience and Purpose (Blast); Organize Informative Writing; Supporting Details; Introductions; Body Paragraphs and Transitions; Conclusions; Style (Blast); Sources and Citations
	Language Skills	Spelling Adjective Suffixes; Spelling Often-Confused Words; Verb Moods	Using the Dash; Active and Passive Verbs; Verb Moods	Verbals; Verb Moods; Commas, Ellipses, or Dashes to Indicate a Pause or Break	Verbals – Infinitives; Active and Passive Verbs; Commas and Compound Sentences
	Mentor Texts	Cujo; The Monkey's Paw; The Tell-Tale Heart	Dear Miss Breed; Teaching History Through Fiction; Hitler Youth: Growing Up in Hitler's Shadow	A Celebration of Grandfathers; Mandatory Volunteer Work for Teenagers	House Divided Speech; Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave; Gettysburg Address



UNIT 1: SUSPENSE!

The Extended Writing Project (EWP) in Grade 8, Unit 1 focuses on the narrative form. Students probe the unit’s central question—*What attracts us to stories of suspense?*—as they work to develop an original suspenseful narrative. The unit’s fiction and nonfiction selections about classic stories of suspense, real-life suspenseful situations, and how suspense is created and employed in print, on the airwaves, and on film provide a context for students as they begin writing their narratives.

In order to assist students in their work, the EWP provides a Student Model that contains the essential features of the narrative form and offers an example of a structured academic grade-level response to the prompt. The Student Model is used to help students better understand how narrative elements such as character, point of view, and plot work together to create a suspenseful story; analyze how the model employs specific skills, such as effective organization, descriptive details, and use of dialogue and pacing, to keep readers at the edge of their seats; examine the process the writer used to develop the narrative through graphic organizers and story road maps; and identify how the model might, like their own narratives, benefit from revision. Additionally, excerpts from the unit selections are offered as mentor texts to show students how professional, real-world examples of narratives exhibit essential features of the form. For example, students analyze how W.W. Jacobs’s “The Monkey’s Paw” employs dialogue to reveal important aspects of the characters’ personalities, or how Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Tell-Tale Heart,” through its deranged and guilt-stricken narrator, exhibits one of the most memorable and horrifying conclusions of all all-time. These striking models serve as both teaching tools and sources of inspiration for young narrative writers.

In addition to reviewing writing skills applicable to all modes, such as audience and purpose, style, introductions, and conclusions, this EWP contains several skills unique to the narrative form of writing. Three examples of such lessons include the skills lessons on narrative techniques and sequencing, descriptive details, and writing dialogue. The Narrative Techniques and Sequencing lesson introduces students to how writers speed up or slow down the pacing as the plot builds from exposition, to rising action, to thrilling climax. The Descriptive Details lesson offers students the chance to learn how to develop setting, characters, and plot through precise language and sensory details, thus bringing the story to life for readers. The Writing Dialogue lesson provides instruction on how both direct and indirect dialogue can be used to reveal significant details about the characters and the plot of a suspenseful narrative. These activities provide scaffolding to allow students of a variety of backgrounds and experiences access to an in-depth understanding of the narrative writing form.

Students apply all of the narrative writing skills they have learned in the unit as they engage in five writing process lessons: prewriting, planning, drafting, revising, and editing/proofreading/publishing. Within these process lessons, students plan, organize, create, and enhance an original narrative work to achieve a polished final product. For example, in the Plan lesson, students create a roadmap based on an example offered by the Student Model that presents a suspenseful story arc. Students also benefit from the Draft and the Revise lessons. These steps of the writing process emphasize student application of the particular narrative skills they have learned. Additionally, students offer one another thoughtful peer reviews after each stage in the writing process, using specific rubrics that apply to narrative writing; writers are encouraged to consider and incorporate this feedback in subsequent stages. These opportunities for collaboration help students to internalize the aspects of narrative writing. They practice the art of discussion, offering constructive suggestions, and they learn to listen to the feedback of their peers in a cooperative effort to revise their narrative writing to the highest possible standard.

Short constructed responses that accompany all Close Read lessons in the unit help students demonstrate understanding of the specific reading and language skills developed in conjunction with the texts, such as analyzing author's purpose and point of view, examining poetic elements, exploring character and theme, identifying Greek and Latin affixes and roots, and raising awareness of word meanings. The prompts also enable students to develop their thinking about why people are drawn to stories of suspense in preparation for writing a suspenseful narrative of their own in the EWP. For example, students explore what master of suspense Alfred Hitchcock meant by the phrase "letting the audience play God," or allowing viewers to know things the characters do not. They are prompted to take a position on whether or not violence is appropriate in suspenseful films and to play defense attorney to Poe's unhinged narrator in *The Tell-Tale Heart*. They also have the opportunity to reflect on how film directors such as Lewis Teague transform the text of novels such as Stephen King's *Cujo*. Additionally, unit Blasts provide a range of topics related to suspense, such as strategies used to create suspense in different mediums and firsthand accounts of how the passengers of the *Titanic* felt and reacted after the ship hit the iceberg. These topics enable students to develop succinct responses to readings and stimulate their thinking about how to develop their own narratives. Other Blasts use elements within the suspenseful unit texts as springboards for helping students utilize text features in order to become more informed consumers.



UNIT 2: IN TIME OF WAR

The Extended Writing Project (EWP) in Grade 8, Unit 2 focuses on the argumentative form. As the unit's essential question—*What does our response to conflict say about us?*—is developed through both fictional and nonfictional texts that explore a wide range of events and experiences during World War II, the EWP tasks students with developing an original argument about the best way to respond to conflict. In order to help students fully develop and support their claims, the project contains a research component, requiring evidence to be drawn from outside sources as well as from the StudySync Library, which features foundational texts such as *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl* and its dramatic interpretation, Winston Churchill's "Blood, Toil, Tears and Sweat" speech, letters from young people of Japanese ancestry relocated to U.S. internment camps during the war, and the oral history of two Germans—one a former Hitler Youth, and the other an Auschwitz survivor.

In order to assist students in their work, the EWP provides a Student Model that contains the essential features of the argumentative form and offers an example of a structured academic grade-level response to the prompt. The Student Model is used to help students better understand how argumentative elements such as claims, reasons, and evidence work together to create a convincing argument; analyze how the model employs specific skills, such as effective organization, strong supporting details obtained from credible sources, and accurate citations of these sources; examine the process the writer used to develop the argumentative essay through graphic organizers and roadmaps; and identify how the model might, like their own essays, benefit from revision. Additionally, excerpts from the unit selections are offered as mentor texts to show students how real-world examples of arguments exhibit essential features of the form. For example, the Point/Counterpoint essays in *Teaching History Through Fiction* demonstrate how writers on both sides of an issue—in this case, whether John Boyne's *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas: A Fable* should be used to teach students about the Holocaust—present clear claims in their introductions and use some of the same sources to support their opposing positions in the body paragraphs of their essays.

In addition to reviewing writing skills applicable to all modes, such as audience and purpose, style, introductions, and conclusions, this EWP contains several skills unique to arguments supported by research. The Research and Note-Taking lesson leads students through the process of how writers go about developing and refining research questions, conducting keyword searches to locate relevant sources, assessing whether or not these sources are credible, and taking effective notes from these sources. The Organize Argumentative Writing lesson offers students the chance to learn how to make a claim in their essay's introduction, offer clear

reasons and convincing evidence in the essay’s body paragraphs, and leave readers with a lasting impression—as well as the clear conviction that the claim was proven—in the essay’s conclusion. The Sources and Citations lesson provides instruction on how to give proper credit for information obtained through research by providing parenthetical citations for both direct quotes and paraphrased information and by creating a Works Cited page. These activities provide scaffolding to allow students of a variety of backgrounds and experiences access to an in-depth understanding of the argumentative writing form.

Students apply all of the argumentative writing skills they have learned in the unit as they engage in five writing process lessons: prewriting, planning, drafting, revising, and editing/proofreading/publishing. Within these process lessons, students plan, organize, create, and enhance an argumentative work to achieve a polished and ultimately persuasive final product. For example, in the Plan lesson, students create a roadmap based on an example offered by the Student Model that presents a thesis, supports it with three strong reasons, and offers convincing evidence drawn from research to reinforce the validity of these reasons. Additionally, students offer one another thoughtful peer reviews after each stage in the writing process, using specific rubrics that apply to argumentative writing; writers are encouraged to consider and incorporate this feedback subsequent stages. These opportunities for collaboration help students to internalize the aspects of argumentative writing and to revise their essays to the highest possible standard.

Short constructed responses that accompany all Close Read lessons in the unit help students demonstrate understanding of the specific reading and language skills developed in conjunction with the texts—such as identifying informational text elements, comparing arguments and claims in opposing essays, exploring character and point of view, and examining the impact of euphemisms and other distortions of language—as well as enable them to develop their thinking about war and different responses to it in preparation for the EWP. For example, students are prompted to respond as a friend to Anne Frank’s compelling and inspirational diary entries, written while hiding from the Nazis in extremely difficult living conditions, or to identify the main idea in Susan Campbell Bartoletti’s informational text about the impact of the Nazi regime on young Germans and the reasons and evidence she provides to support it. Additionally, unit Blasts provide valuable background on War War II topics, including the effects of conflict on communities, descriptions of heroes who emerged during the Holocaust, and the influence of propaganda. These topics enable students to develop succinct responses to readings and stimulate their thinking as they develop and support a claim about the best way to respond to conflict.



UNIT 3: A MORAL COMPASS

The Extended Writing Project (EWP) in Grade 8, Unit 3 helps students access the knowledge of argumentative writing they developed in Unit 2 in order to explore another type of the form: literary analysis. Students probe the unit’s central question—*How can our life experiences shape our values?*—as they develop an original literary analysis about how experiences can change a person’s values for the better or for the worse. The unit’s selections, which include such foundational works as Lousia May Alcott’s *Little Women*, Mark Twain’s *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, and Langston Hughes’s “Mother to Son,” feature a wide range of both fictional characters and real-life people who are separated by vast differences in culture and time period but who all exhibit the profound influence of experience on personal values and thus provide a context for students as they begin writing their literary analyses.

In order to assist students in their work, the EWP provides a Student Model that contains the essential features of literary analysis and offers an example of a structured academic grade-level response to the prompt. The Student Model is used to help students better understand how argumentative elements such as claims, reasons, and evidence work together to create a convincing literary analysis; analyze how the model employs specific skills, such as effective organization, strong supporting details, and accurate citations of sources; examine the process the student writer used to develop the literary analysis through graphic organizers and roadmaps; and identify how the model might, like their own essays, benefit from revision. Additionally, excerpts from the unit selections are offered as mentor texts to show students how professional texts exhibit features of good writing—such as how Rudolfo Anaya’s “A Celebration of Grandfathers” employs transitions to show the relationships between ideas—as well as to demonstrate how real-world examples of argumentative writing exhibit essential features of the form. For example, the Point/Counterpoint essays in *Mandatory Volunteer Work for Teenagers* illustrate how writers on both sides of an issue present clear claims in their introductions and support these claims as well as refute counterclaims in the body paragraphs of their essays.

In addition to reviewing writing skills applicable to all modes, such as audience and purpose, style, introductions, and conclusions, this EWP contains several skills unique to the argumentative form of writing, of which literary analysis is an example. The Organize Argumentative Writing lesson introduces students to how writers present a thesis or claim in the introduction of their literary analyses and support this claim through a series of main ideas and supporting details that fit within a clear organizational structure such as compare and contrast, problem and solution, or cause and effect. The Supporting Details lesson offers students the chance to learn how to assess what readers already know and to determine what details, facts, definitions,

and examples they will require in order to be fully convinced of the validity of the essay's thesis or claim. The Sources and Citations lesson provides instruction on how to draw evidence from literary sources and give proper credit for this information. These activities provide scaffolding to allow students of a variety of backgrounds and experiences access to an in-depth understanding of the literary analysis as an argumentative writing form.

Students apply all of the argumentative writing skills they have learned in the unit as they engage in five writing process lessons: prewriting, planning, drafting, revising, and editing/proofreading/publishing. Within these process lessons, students plan, organize, create, and enhance a literary analysis to achieve a polished and ultimately persuasive final product. For example, in the Plan lesson, students create a roadmap based on an example offered by the Student Model that presents a thesis or claim and supports it through valid reasoning and relevant evidence. Additionally, students offer one another thoughtful peer reviews after each stage in the writing process, using specific rubrics that apply to argumentative writing; writers are encouraged to consider and incorporate this feedback in subsequent stages. These opportunities for collaboration help students to internalize the aspects of argumentative writing and to revise their literary analyses to the highest possible standard.

Short constructed responses that accompany all Close Read lessons in the unit help students demonstrate understanding of the specific reading and language skills developed in conjunction with the texts, such as comparing and contrasting novel and film presentations of the same scene, exploring how the structure of a poem helps advance its theme, identifying important differences between a word's connotation and denotation, and raising awareness of word meaning. The prompts also enable students to develop their thinking about how people's experiences shape their values in preparation for writing a literary analysis in the EWP. For example, students explore how Hughes uses figurative language and dialect to create a specific tone about life in "Mother to Son." They are also prompted to take a position on which of two writers makes the most effective argument about whether or not teenagers should be required to volunteer. Additionally, unit Blasts provide a range of topics related to the relationship between values and experience, such as why people are driven to help others, the importance of family, and the role of "trickster" characters in stories across cultures. These topics enable students to develop succinct responses to readings and stimulate their thinking about how to develop their literary analyses. Other Blasts use elements within the unit texts as springboards for helping students develop additional writing skills, such as completing job applications and business letters.



UNIT 4: THE CIVIL WAR

The Extended Writing Project (EWP) in Grade 8, Unit 4 focuses on informational/explanatory writing. As the unit’s essential question—*How did the War Between the States redefine America?*—is developed through both fictional and nonfictional texts that explore a wide range of perspectives and experiences in connection with the American Civil War, the EWP tasks students with developing an informative/explanatory essay about how the war changed Americans and their ideas about freedom. In order to help students fully develop and support the thesis statements of their essays, students are required to draw evidence from at least two texts within the StudySync Library, which includes foundational texts such as Abraham Lincoln’s “House Divided” speech and “Gettysburg Address,” Sojourner Truth’s “Speech to the Ohio Women’s Conference: And Ain’t I a Woman”, Frederick Douglass’s autobiographical *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave*, and Stephen Crane’s *The Red Badge of Courage*, as well as Irene Hunt’s Newbery Honor novel *Across Five Aprils*.

In order to assist students in their work, the EWP provides a Student Model that contains the essential features of informative/explanatory writing and offers an example of a structured academic grade-level response to the prompt. The Student Model is used to help students better understand how each body paragraph in an informative/explanatory essay should provide a clear topic sentence, convincing evidence, and an explanation of how that evidence supports the thesis; analyze how the model employs specific skills, such as effective organizational structure, strong supporting details, and accurate citations of sources; examine the process the student writer used to develop the informative essay through graphic organizers and roadmaps; and identify how the model might, like their own essays, benefit from revision. Additionally, excerpts from the unit selections are offered as mentor texts to demonstrate how real-world examples of informative/explanatory writing exhibit essential features of the form. For example, Lincoln’s introduction in “The Gettysburg Address” offers one of the world’s most famous examples of how to identify a topic, state a thesis, and capture the interest and attention of an audience from the get-go, while a passage in *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave* employs figurative language to present a stark and striking concluding message.

In addition to reviewing writing skills applicable to all modes, such as audience and purpose, style, introductions, and conclusions, this EWP contains several skills unique to informative/explanatory writing. The Organize Informative Writing lesson introduces students to how writers present a thesis in the introduction of their essays and support this thesis through a series of main ideas and supporting details that fit within a clear organizational structure such as compare and contrast, problem and solution, or cause and effect.

The Supporting Details lesson offers students the chance to learn how to assess what readers already know about the topic and to determine what details, facts, definitions, and examples they will require in order to be fully convinced of the validity of the essay's thesis. The Sources and Citations lesson provides instruction on how to draw evidence from sources and give proper credit for this information. These activities provide scaffolding to allow students of a variety of backgrounds and experiences access to an in-depth understanding of the explanatory/informative writing.

Students apply all of the informative/explanatory writing skills they have learned in the unit as they engage in five writing process lessons: prewriting, planning, drafting, revising, and editing/proofreading/publishing. Within these process lessons, students plan, organize, create, and enhance an informative/explanatory essay and achieve a polished and ultimately effective final product. For example, in the Plan lesson, students create a roadmap based on an example offered by the Student Model that presents a thesis and supports that thesis through body paragraphs comprised of strong main ideas, relevant evidence, and clear analysis. Additionally, students offer one another thoughtful peer reviews after each stage in the writing process, using specific rubrics that apply to informative/explanatory writing; writers are encouraged to consider and incorporate this feedback in subsequent stages. These opportunities for collaboration help students to internalize the aspects of informative/explanatory writing and to revise their essays to the highest possible standard.

Short constructed responses that accompany all Close Read lessons in the unit help students demonstrate understanding of the specific reading and language skills developed in conjunction with the texts, such as comparing and contrasting differing accounts of the same speech, examining how a text's medium affects its message, exploring character and point of view, identifying important differences between a word's connotation and denotation, and analyzing the impact of figurative language. Students, like Lincoln himself, are required to write a speech about a topic of personal importance that persuades an audience to accept a point of view. The prompts also enable students to develop their thinking about how the Civil War affected Americans' ideas about freedom in preparation for writing an informative/explanatory essay in the EWP. For example, students analyze how Frederick Douglass uses figurative language to strengthen his argument against slavery and examine how James L. Swanson probes the mind of John Wilkes Booth, Lincoln's killer. Additionally, unit Blasts provide a range of topics related to the impact of war on a people's ideas about freedom, such as the importance of facing mortality and saying goodbye to loved ones, the role women played during the American Civil War, the war's influence on our language, and the impact of the ongoing civil war in Syria. These topics enable students to develop succinct responses to readings and stimulate their thinking about how to develop their informative/explanatory essays.



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