GRADES 6–8

Sample Sessions

UNITS OF STUDY *for* Teaching Reading

LUCY CALKINS *with* COLLEAGUES *from the* READING AND WRITING PROJECT

Heinemann
DEDICATED TO TEACHERS™

Units of Study for Teaching Reading, Middle School Grades

Nine Units of Study

- The units offer all of the teaching points, minilessons, conferences, and small-group work needed to teach a comprehensive workshop curriculum.
- Each session within the units models Lucy and her colleagues' carefully crafted teaching moves and language.
- Each unit provides 4-6 weeks of instruction.
- The middle school reading units are available for separate purchase to allow for flexible sequencing across grades 6–9.*

* *See page 3 for a suggested sequencing chart.*

A Guide to the Reading Workshop, Middle School Grades

- The *Guide* introduces the principles, methods, classroom structures, and instructional frameworks that characterize effective workshop teaching.
- It provides the information teachers need to prepare to teach the units, and offers guidance on how to meet the needs of all students.

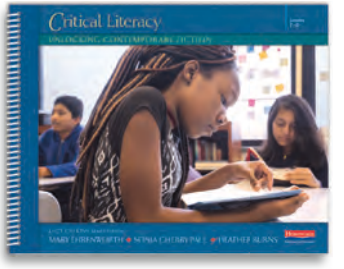
Online Resources

- The online resources that accompany each unit contain a treasure chest of resources including checklists, pre- and post assessments, Spanish translations of select resources, video orientations, web links, and more!

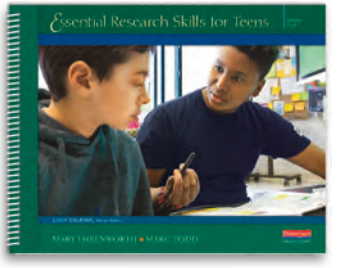
Trade Books

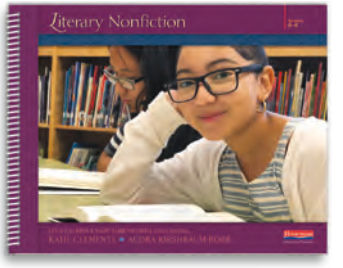
- Trade books for whole-class read-aloud help teachers model the skills and strategies students will practice.

Trade Books

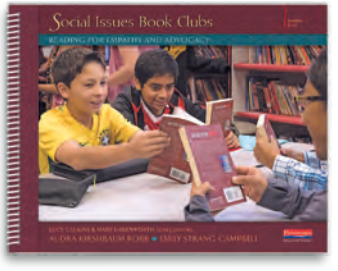


Fiction Units





Nonfiction Units



Book Club Units

Teacher Guide

For complete details, please visit **unitsofstudy.com/middleschoolreading/**

"This series builds on decades of teaching and research in literally tens of thousands of schools. When adolescents are explicitly taught the skills and strategies of proficient reading and are invited to live as richly literate people do, carrying books everywhere, bringing reading into every nook and corner of their lives, the results are dramatic."

—LUCY CALKINS

Welcome to the middle school grades Units of Study for Teaching Reading sampler. This booklet includes sample sessions for the middle school reading units chosen to broadly represent the range of work that students will do and to provide a snapshot view of how instruction develops across the series.

SAMPLER CONTENTS

OVERVIEW

SAMPLE SESSIONS

Units of Study for Teaching Reading, Middle Grades

What Do Middle Grade Readers Need?

We want our middle grades students to become flexible, resilient readers who read for pleasure as well as for multiple academic purposes. We want them to have a toolkit of strategies for dealing with difficulty, and we want them to know when and how to use those strategies. Not least, we want students to read broadly and deeply, alert to the intricacies of texts and to the power of language.

How Can We Best Meet Those Needs?

To accomplish the ambitious goals we have for students, we must reconsider how we think about English Language Arts classrooms and curricula. We can no longer conceive of the curriculum as a few books kids will master. Ambitious world-class standards require that we equip students with a repertoire of skills and strategies to help them be more powerful in any text, whether print, digital, or multimodal.

As we adapt to new instructional priorities, we must also rethink the classroom structures that support our teaching. Reading workshop offers a powerful framework that allows the teacher to listen, to assess, and to teach complex reading strategies while also coaching into each student's zone of proximal development. During each day in the reading workshop students read for the bulk of the time, and as they do, they draw upon an ever-growing repertoire of skills, tools, strategies, and habits.

Flexible Sequencing Options

Unlike the K–5 reading units, each middle school reading unit is available for separate purchase to allow for flexible sequencing. The chart below shows one suggested 6–8 sequence for these units. You may choose a different sequence based on your school's curricular needs, but also keep in mind that there is a layering of complexity across the units that you will want to consider as you plan.

Units of Study for Teaching Reading, Middle Grades			
Grade 6	A Deep Study of Character 	Tapping the Power of Nonfiction 	Social Issues Book Clubs: Reading for Empathy and Advocacy 
Grade 7	Investigating Characterization: Author-Study Book Clubs 	Essential Research Skills for Teens (Grades 7–9) 	Historical Fiction Book Clubs 
Grade 8	Dystopian Book Clubs 	Literary Nonfiction 	Critical Literacy: Unlocking Contemporary Fiction (Grades 7–9) 

OVERVIEW AND CONTENTS

A Deep Study of Character

MARY EHRENWORTH

This unit serves as a primer in what it means to participate in an intense reading workshop. It introduces students to a variety of instructional methods such as read-aloud, partner work, and minilessons, and coaches both teachers and students in how to harness those methods to increase reading expertise and independence.

Students will learn to consider more complex character traits, to investigate how setting shapes characters, and to analyze how characters are vehicles for themes. The unit also helps readers take more charge of their reading lives and engages students with close reading, gathering text evidence, and weighing and evaluating multiple theories about complex characters.

This is an ideal unit for the beginning of the school year, offering extra support for organizing a classroom library, matching readers to books, organizing partnerships, and planning for reading workshops.

BEND I ✦ Considering Complex Character Traits

Letter to Teachers: Day Zero

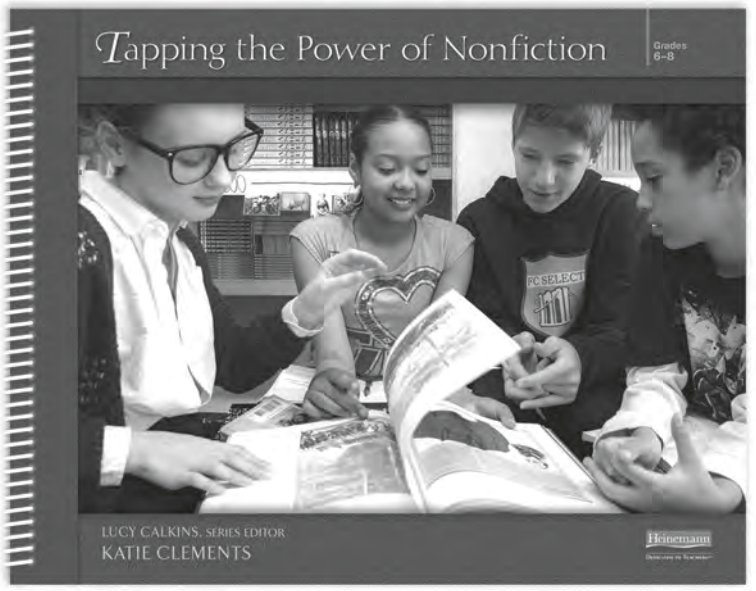
1. Read-Aloud: Investigating Multiple Character Traits
2. Readers Revise Their Thinking as They Accumulate Evidence
3. Developing Courses of Study with a Partner: Book Choices and Thinking Work
4. Perceptive Readers Acknowledge the Parts of a Character that Are Less Likeable
5. Read-Aloud: Some Character Traits Matter More Than Others, Because They Affect the Rest of the Story
6. Lifting the Level of Your Writing about Reading
7. Readers Consider the Pressures Acting on Characters
8. Readers Reflect (on Their Novels and Their Reading Lives)

BEND II ✦ Investigating How Setting Shapes Characters

9. Read-Aloud: Characters Are Often Shaped by the Mood or Atmosphere of the Setting
10. Readers Attend to the Precise Language Authors Use to Describe the Setting
11. Sometimes Characters Are Torn by Competing Pressures, Including the Pressures of a Place
12. Settings Can Change over Time, Not Just Physically, but Psychologically
13. Read-Aloud: Characters Acting as a Group Can Wield Enormous Influence, for Good or for Evil
14. Settings Also Change in Time, Often Bringing in Backstory to Develop the Character
15. Readers Share Their Work and Reflect on Their Challenges and Growth

BEND III ✦ Analyzing Characters as Vehicles for Themes

16. Read-Aloud: Characters' Troubles Become Motifs in a Story
17. Moving from Motifs to Themes
18. Investigating How Symbolism Relates to Themes
19. Taking Charge of Your Collaborative Reading Life
20. Read-Aloud: Reading Aloud to Support Repertoire and Agency
21. Reflection and Agency Centers



Tapping the Power of Nonfiction

KATIE CLEMENTS

Nonfiction reading skills are essential to students' achievement in virtually every academic discipline. To do science, students need to read science books and articles. To study history, they need to be skilled at reading all kinds of primary and secondary sources. When we help students become powerful readers of nonfiction, we help them become powerful learners.

Across this unit, students will develop a solid set of nonfiction reading skills: discerning central ideas, summarizing to create a concise version of a text, synthesizing within and across texts, building vocabulary, growing ideas, and reading critically to question the author's point of view and perspective. Students will also learn to develop flexibility as they read across text types, reading a variety of nonfiction chapter books, articles, trade books, and online resources, and transferring what they know from one text type to the next.

BEND I ✦ Navigating Nonfiction Chapter Books in Book Clubs, with an Emphasis on Discerning Central Ideas

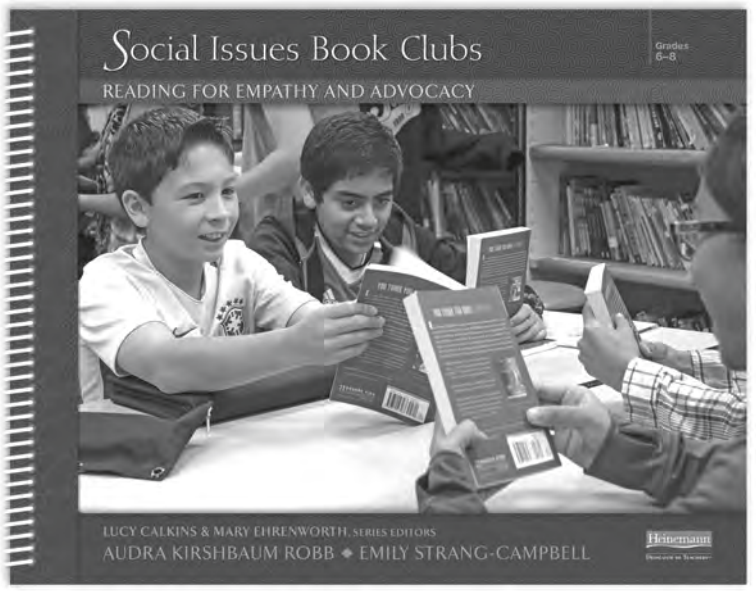
1. Read-Aloud: Reading with Engagement and Fascination Right from the Introduction
2. Generating Questions and Ideas that Spark Rich Club Conversations
3. Determining Central Ideas
4. Rethinking Initial Ideas
5. Learning from the Stories Embedded in Nonfiction Texts
6. Ideas Have Roots: Tracing How Ideas Are Developed across a Text
7. Self-Assessing and Goal-Setting

BEND II ✦ Investigating Topics with Research Groups, and Synthesizing across Texts on That Topic

8. Read-Aloud: Building Up a Bit of Background Knowledge When You Encounter a New Topic
9. Drawing on All You Know to Tackle New Projects with More Skill
10. Summarizing Complex Traits
11. Synthesizing across Texts
12. Dealing with Tricky Parts: Reading Outside the Text to Help You Comprehend Inside
13. Getting to Know the Lingo of Your Topic
14. Readers Don't Wait to Do Their Own Thinking
15. Developing Carefully Curated Text Sets

BEND III ✦ Researching a New Topic with More Independence While Helping Students to Read Critically

16. Launching a New Round of Research Groups with Greater Independence
17. Inquiry into the Particular Challenges of Online Research
18. Read-Aloud: Determining the Author's Point of View and How It's Advanced
19. Dealing with Texts that Contradict Each Other
20. Crafting TED Talks to Get Others Fascinated by Your Topic



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Social Issues Book Clubs
Reading for Empathy and Advocacy

AUDRA KIRSHBAUM ROBB ✦ EMILY STRANG-CAMPBELL

The topic of social issues, the lens for reading in this unit, is a topic that matters greatly to the young human beings who enter our classrooms every day. In middle school, many kinds of issues start to weigh more heavily on students: relationship issues, school issues, and a growing awareness of larger societal pressures. There can be serious consequences to the spiraling troubles that surround middle school kids.

A recent *Washington Post* article titled "Does Reading Make You a Better Person?" concludes that the answer to the title question is "Yes!" Reading literature especially has proven to increase people's ability to empathize with others, and to be more socially aware. A driving force in this unit is the power of reading to transform how we see others and to show us new ways to be kind, to connect, and to stand up for what's right.

BEND I ✦ Studying Characters' Relationships

1. Read-Aloud: Reading for Trouble and Discerning Relationship Issues
2. Weighing Characters' Relationships for the Positive and Negative—in Literature and in Life
3. Noticing How Characters Contribute to Relationship Issues through Actions and Reactions
4. Club Work that Fuels Reading Plans and Deeper Thoughtful Talk
5. Read-Aloud: Analyzing How and Why Power Affects Relationships
6. Studying When Character Traits Collide
7. Reflecting on Relationships with Books to Decide on a Future Course of Study

BEND II ✦ Analyzing Group-Related Issues: Considering Power, Perspective, and Tone

8. Read-Aloud: Thinking about Groups as Sources of Issues
9. When People within a Group Struggle, It's Often Because of Power Imbalances
10. Using Common Literary Themes to Think More Deeply about Group Issues in a Text
11. The Intersection of Group Identities with Individual Traits
12. Read-Aloud: Weighing Positive and Negative Messages in Stories
13. Investigating When Texts Are Reinforcing and Challenging Assumptions about Groups
14. Considering Roles People Can Play When Issues Arise—and Resolving to Be Upstanders

BEND III ✦ Bringing Your Life and Others' Lives to Your Reading

15. Bringing Yourself, with All Your Complications, to Your Reading
16. Learning from Our Texts and from One Another
17. Identifying with Less Likeable and Less Admirable Characters
18. Curating Text Sets and Making Plans to Continue Reading Together

OVERVIEW AND CONTENTS

Investigating Characterization
Author-Study Book Clubs

MARY EHRENWORTH ✦ KATY WISCHOW

This unit of study focuses readers on studying not just characters, but characterization, or how authors create multifaceted characters replete with weakness and strengths, complex relationships with others, and life lessons they learn and teach. The unit strikes a delicate balance between encouraging readers to hold on to the magic of reading, allowing them to slip longingly into the pages of a compelling story, and presenting readers with opportunities to engage in meta-analysis, fostering an appreciation of the craft of the text as well as the story.

Throughout the unit readers will:

- Come to apprentice themselves to characters they discover in realistic fiction;
- Explore how authors use perspective, point of view, and the management of time across the story to control readers' sympathy and experience of epiphanies;
- Consider moments or scenes in narratives as windows into characters;
- Learn to think and talk like readers who are also writers with their own checklists of authorial techniques;
- Develop the ability to reread and rethink as they examine stories through multiple lenses.

BEND I ✦ A Deep Dive into Perspective

1. Read-Aloud: Attending to Details that Illuminate Perspective
2. Attending to Minor Characters and How They See the World
3. Figuring Out Point of View—Who Is Telling the Story?
4. Authors Lead Readers to Epiphanies
5. Authors Channel Readers' Sympathy by Controlling Access to Characters' Inner Thinking
6. Distinguishing Simultaneous, Multiple Perspectives
7. Reflecting across the Parts of a Reading Life

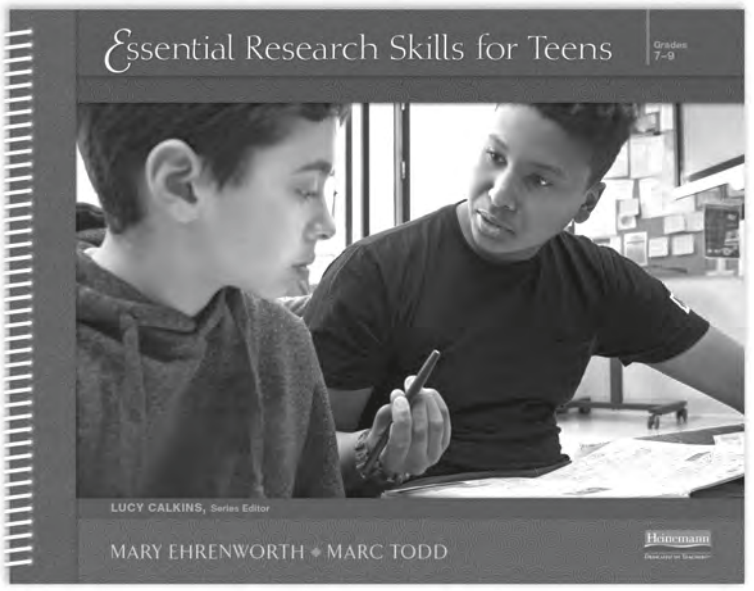
BEND II ✦ Author's Craft: Analyzing How Authors Bring Characters to Life

8. Read-Aloud: Noticing Moments that Give Readers Extra Insight into Characters
9. Analyzing Smaller Moments to Get Even More Insight into Characters
10. Investigating Author's Techniques
11. Reaching for Precise Words to Describe an Author's Technique
12. Read-Aloud: Investigating the Author's Goals, as Well as Techniques
13. Rereading and Revising Initial Thoughts about an Author's Techniques and Goals
14. "Speed Dating" to Teach Others What You're Learning

BEND III ✦ Investigating Authorial Control

15. Read-Aloud: Authors Set Readers Up to Develop Intense, Evolving Relationships with Characters
16. Authors Use Time Shifts to Deepen a Reader's Relationship with a Character
17. Investigating Verb Tense and Its Relationship to Subtle Shifts in Time
18. Readers' Experience of Characters Helps Them to Also Explore Themes
19. Moving from Themes to Reinvestigating Authorial Techniques

20 & 21. Rehearsing, Producing, and Sharing Video Author Talks: A Final Celebration



OVERVIEW AND CONTENTS

Essential Research Skills for Teens

MARY EHRENWORTH ✦ MARC TODD

This unit is all about learning well in today's digital world and then sharing that knowledge with others—the most fundamental and joyous of intellectual experiences. Students will form study groups to research topics of contemporary, scientific, or historical significance. The first bend immerses readers into essential study habits that will serve them well throughout their research across the unit. Bend II focuses on developing ethical research practices and internet literacy skills as readers tackle the challenges of internet research. Students will learn to check sources, discern "fake news," and compensate for connotations and confirmation bias. As students gain expertise in their research topics, the third bend calls readers to study the disputes and arguments inside their topics, eventually coming to informed positions that they will present in a final project.

The skills and study habits instilled in this unit help aim to increase equity in academic capital, giving more students access to even the most challenging academic classes, and setting the stage for students to be successful in high school and college.

BEND I ✦ Essential Study Habits—Building Background Knowledge, Taking Lean Notes, and Becoming an Effective Study Partner

Day Zero: Forming Research Clubs and Choosing Research Topics

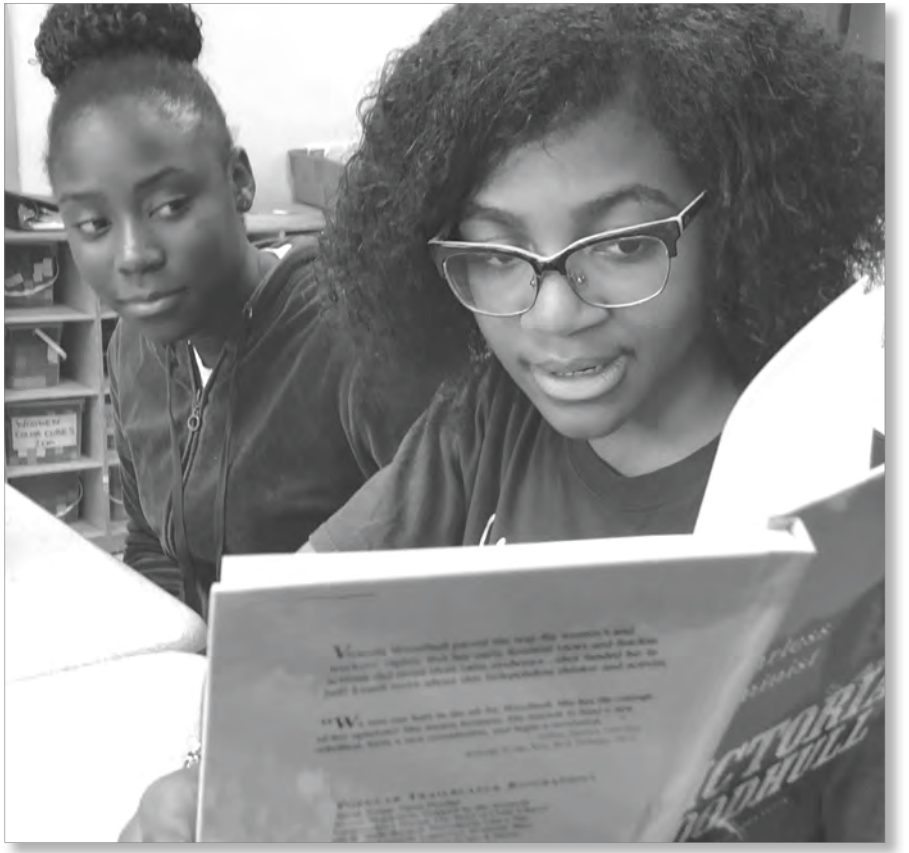
1. Read-Aloud: Discerning Explicit and Implicit Ideas in Complex Nonfiction
2. Becoming a Proficient Study Partner
3. Tapping the Power of Introverts and Extroverts in Collaborative Work
4. Conceptual Vocabulary Sorts
5. Advanced Notebook Work: Synthesis Pages
6. A Workday for Research and Note-Taking with Agency
7. Synthesizing Knowledge as Infographics
8. Watercooler Talks: Researchers Share Knowledge

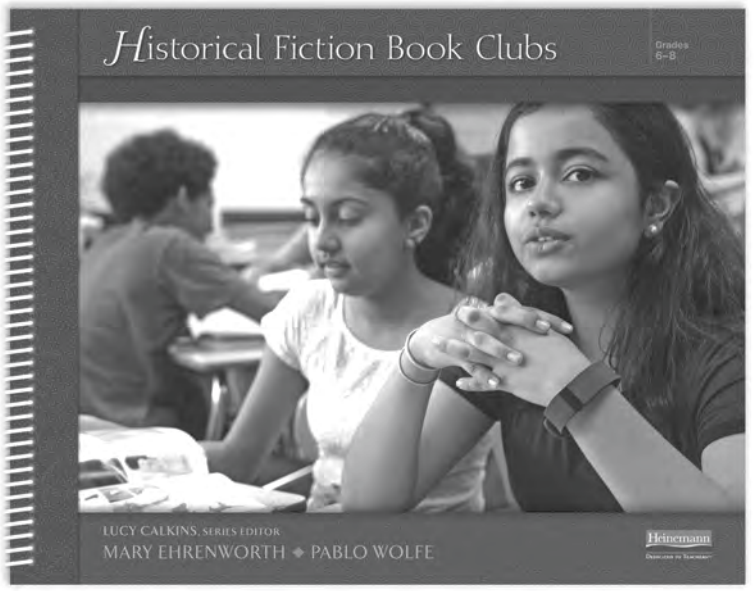
BEND II ✦ Ethical Research Practices and Internet Literacy

9. Read-Aloud: Discerning Arguments and Disputes inside a Research Topic
10. Ethical Researchers Confront Their Own Biases
11. Studying Mentor Notebooks to Deepen and Personalize Note-Taking
12. Using a Continuum to Track the Fairness of Research
13. Studying Connotative Language for Implicit Text Bias
14. Investigating Authorship, Uncovering Agendas, and Critiquing Representation
15. The Non-Neutrality of Search Engines
16. Remaining Alert to the Possibilities of Fake News
17. Flash-Debating to Rehearse Preliminary Arguments (and See Counterclaims)

BEND III ✦ From Research to Activism

18. Read-Aloud: Starting with Mentors: Teen TED Talks
19. Authoring Work Plans and Putting Them into Action
20. Raising the Level of Talks
21. Celebrating Content and Reflecting on Opportunities for Transfer





Historical Fiction Book Clubs

MARY EHRENWORTH ✦ PABLO WOLFE

Historical fiction helps students see how history is not a collection of old, dead facts to be memorized, but is full of compelling stories that help us understand our present and, perhaps, what we need to do to shape a better future. We hope that the reading of historical fiction in this unit will not only kindle in your students an interest in the genre, but that it will also generate awareness of how much we have yet to learn from history and the stories of people who struggled, suffered, and persevered as we do today.

As students progress through these lessons, they will read stories from history that will expose them to hard truths about the world. They will cry out, "That's not fair!" again and again, and the teacher will respond with "You're right!" and then ask, "What kind of world do we want to live in? How do we get there?"

BEND I ✦ Historical Fiction Characters and the Conflicts that Shape Them

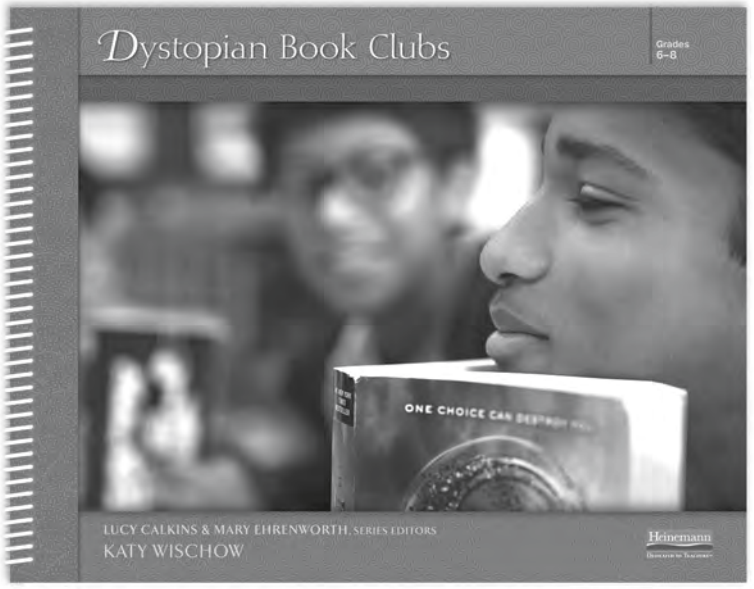
1. Read-Aloud: Orienting Oneself to the Story
2. Filling in the Backstory
3. Analyzing How Characters Respond to Trouble
4. Read-Aloud: The Collision of Internal Traits with External Conflict
5. Attending to Minor Characters and Missing Perspectives
6. Looking Back from the End of Stories with New Insights about Themes
7. Clubs Analyze Their Progress and Plan Reading Projects

BEND II ✦ Studying an Era

8. Read-Aloud: Readers Become Students of an Era
9. Reading Outside the Text to Build Up Background Knowledge
10. Perspectives Clash with Each Other and with History
11. Reading Differently Because You Have Knowledge of the Era
12. Learning Truth from Fiction
13. Clubs Curate Their Work in Reading Projects

BEND III ✦ Characters and Readers Come of Age

14. Characters Come of Age
15. Analyzing Power in the Midst of Conflict
16. Read-Aloud (Video-Aloud): Change Can Be Complicated
17. The Past Is Always with Us
18. Clubs Leave a Legacy



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Dystopian Book Clubs

KATY WISCHOW

This unit is for teachers whose classes could benefit from a deep study of an incredibly engaging genre. It will support classes who could learn to talk more deeply about their reading and push themselves to read with greater volume. It will also pay off for teachers who want to take advantage of the power of a popular genre to lure kids into studying complexity.

During the unit, readers will develop skills in reading more complex fiction texts: analyzing symbolism, deepening character analysis, understanding story arcs, reading critically with questions in mind. Meanwhile, they will build on their work with reading notebooks, strengthening their ability to transfer their skills from one context to another, and supporting their increasing independence as readers and thinkers.

BEND I ✦ Reading Dystopia in the Shadow of Literary Traditions

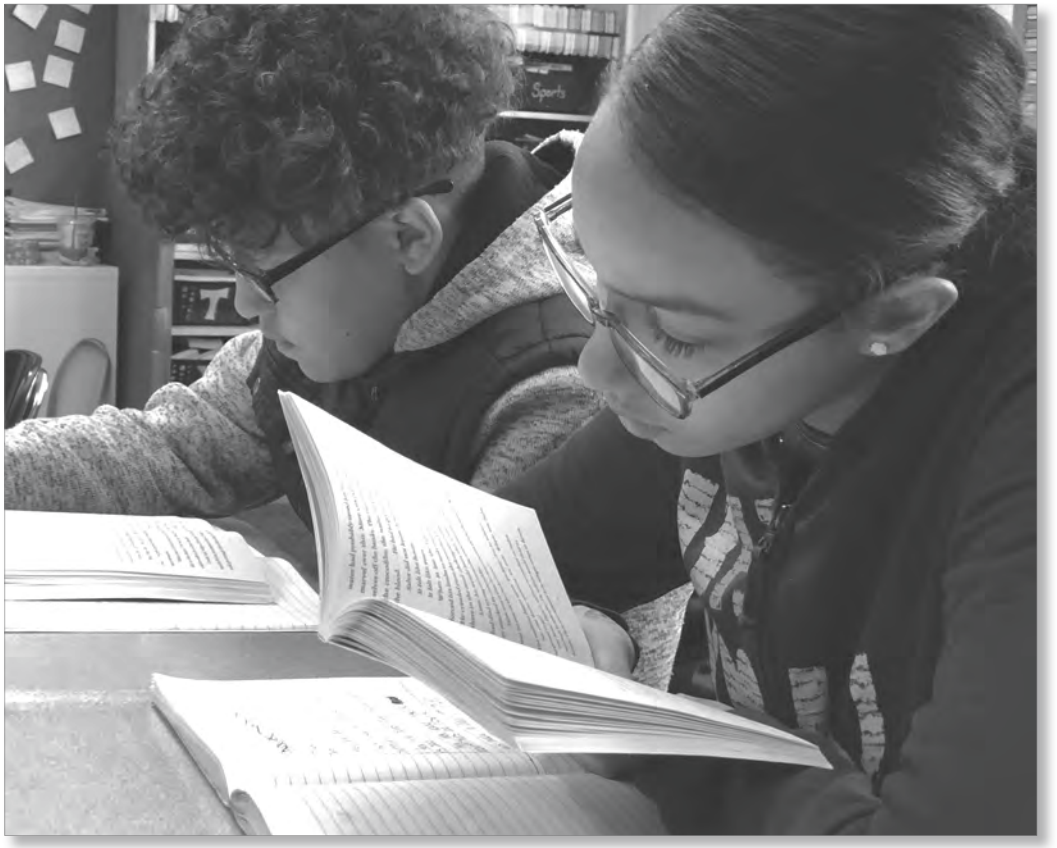
1. Read-Aloud: Letting Genre Guide Your Reading Work
2. Understanding Characters' Responses to Power in a Dystopian World
3. Noticing Dystopian Archetypes
4. Understanding the Complexity of Archetypal Characters
5. Thinking about Characters' Responses to Systemic Problems
6. Doing More Wondering
7. Seeking Emerging Symbolism in Dystopian Texts
8. Welcoming Students to the Dystopian Club

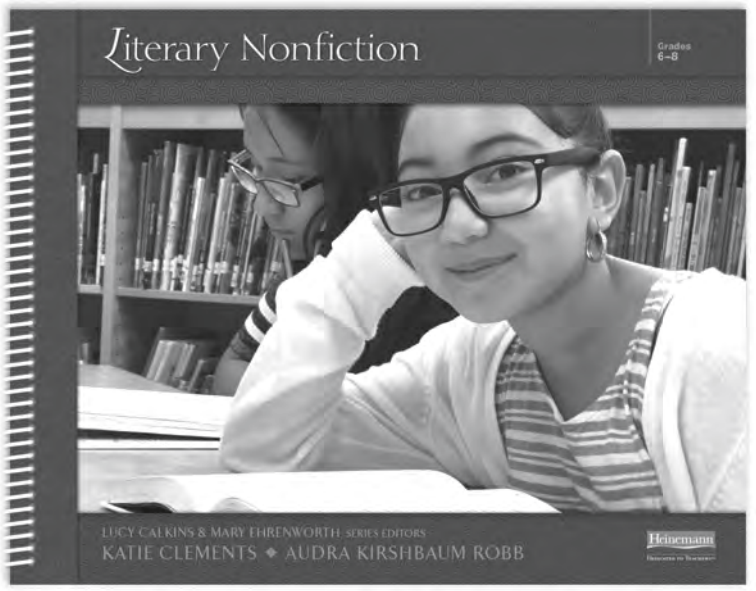
BEND II ✦ Investigating the Challenges of Series Reading

9. Figuring Out What Makes Series Reading Complex
10. Using Your Notebook to Better Understand a Reading Series
11. Connecting Scenes across a Series
12. Understanding the Pressures and Motivations that Lead to Character Change
13. Studying How the Meaning of Symbols Can Shift across Series
14. Celebrating Thinking with a Gallery Walk

BEND III ✦ Bridging the World and Dystopian Novels

15. Understanding What Dystopian Fiction Reveals about Our World
16. Considering Connections between Dystopian Worlds and Our Own Society
17. Read-Aloud: Supporting Transfer and Independence
18. Thinking about How Symbols Move between Dystopian Worlds and Our Own
19. Celebrating Growth, Inspiration, and Empowerment





Literary Nonfiction

KATIE CLEMENTS ✦ AUDRA KIRSHBAUM ROBB

In this unit, you'll introduce your students to nonfiction books and media they will love, and teach them how to make the most of these portals to fascinating times, places, and people—not to escape our world, but to better understand and address its issues. The book-length nonfiction that middle schoolers will read possesses a unique blend of heart-rending storytelling, artful juxtaposition of subtopics, and challenging density.

The skills of this unit are essential for students coming of age in an era of global collaboration and vital in the development of a truly informed, critical electorate. Across the unit readers will cultivate their ability to:

- Glean central ideas that are not stated outright and identify and trace implicit arguments;
- Build connections across parts of texts and across multiple texts;
- Develop the stamina, patience, and the analytic presence of mind necessary to read longer nonfiction;
- Flexibly activate their schema as they read passages that seem more informational and passages that seem more narrative in their literary nonfiction texts;
- Transfer their literary nonfiction skills to digital and hybrid media.

BEND I ✦ Embracing Complexity

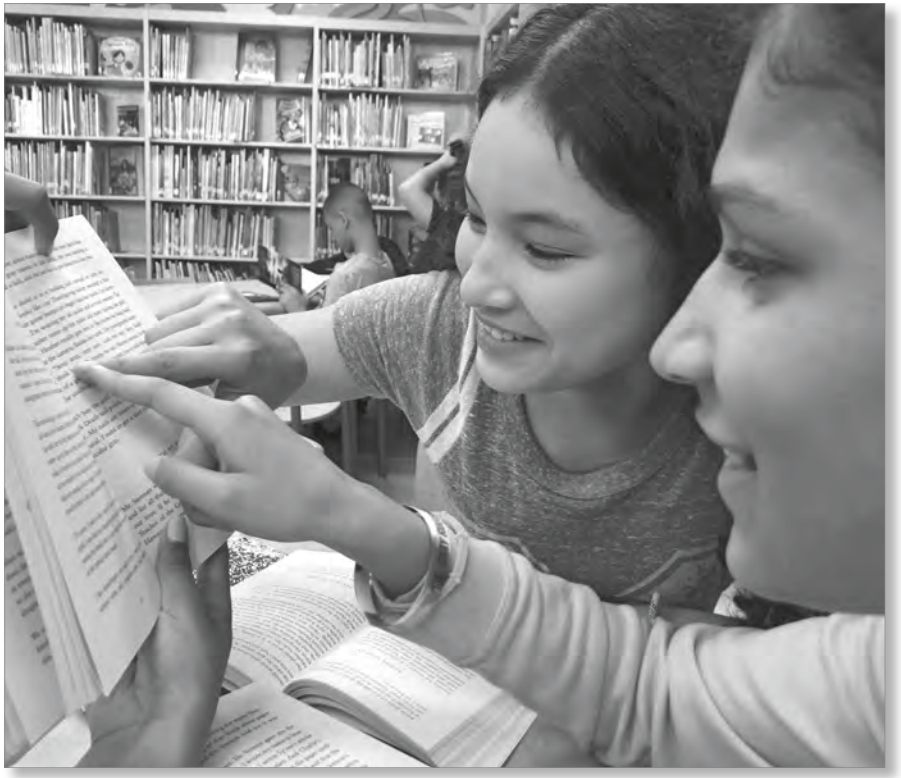
1. Read-Aloud: Reading for Central Ideas, Themes, and Issues from Page One
2. Expecting Complexity: Finding Multiple Central Ideas within Key Sections
3. Developing Note-Taking Systems to Track Complicated Thinking
4. Read-Aloud: Flexibly Activating Your Narrative and Information Schemas to Deepen Comprehension
5. Perspectives, Positions, and Reasoning in Informational Text? You Bet!
6. Reflecting on Reading Identities, Writing about Reading, and Partner Work

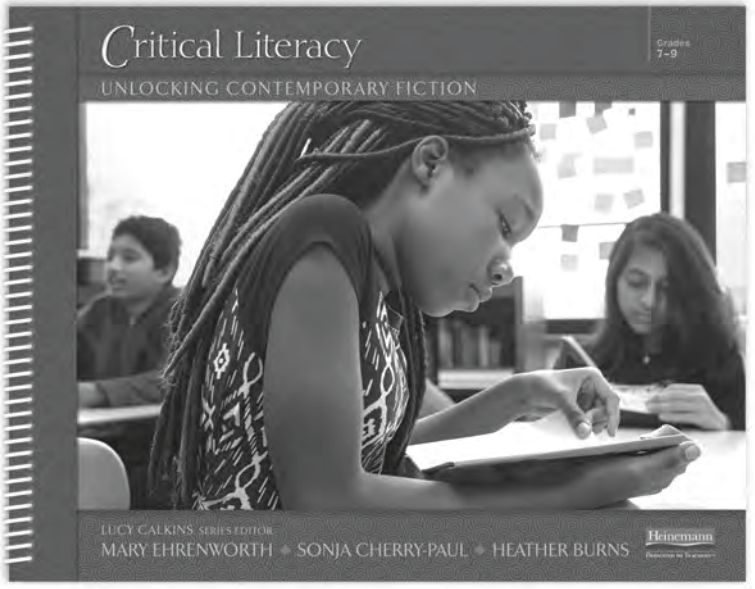
BEND II ✦ Making Connections

7. Read-Aloud: Expecting that Parts Connect, Even if at First They Seem Unrelated
8. Analyzing Descriptive Passages Closely to Learn about Embedded Ideas, Themes, and Issues
9. Recognizing Complex Causes and Effects
10. Innovating Systems to Notice and Track Related Parts
11. A Writing about Reading Seminar and Workshop
12. Read-Aloud: Rereading, a Simple Tool for Handling Complexity
13. Understanding When You're Not Understanding, and Looking Inside and Outside the Text for Help
14. Bringing the Lenses of Other Disciplines to Bear on Your Reading
15. An Idea Showcase: Exploring Issues and Subtopics that Extend across Texts and Time Periods

BEND III ✦ Beyond Print: Transferring Literary Nonfiction Skills to Digital and Hybrid Media

16. Getting to Know Other Formats of Literary Nonfiction through Inquiry Centers
17. Harnessing Your Literary Nonfiction Skills and Innovating to Tackle New Formats
18. Drawing on All You Know to Study Documentaries, with a Special Emphasis on Craft
19. Reading for Bias: Considering Heard and Missing Perspectives and Voices
20. Creating a Digital Text Recommendation to Share a Powerful Text with Others





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Critical Literacy
Unlocking Contemporary Fiction

MARY EHRENWORTH ✦ SONJA CHERRY-PAUL ✦ HEATHER BURNS

This unit is about cultural relevance and getting teens to fall in love with books that are deeply meaningful to the lives they are living right now. The unit will introduce young people to some of the great writers of their generation, the writers who are writing for them, and will create powerful opportunities for teens to share their voices, and find their places, in school and in the world.

Across the unit, readers will:

- Deepen their comprehension, studying summaries and reviews in preparation for reading and developing their own analytical summarizing techniques;
- Consider transactional reading practices, identifying the ways that readers bring their own identities to a text and the ways that these identities shape their responses;
- Be innovative in their writing about reading, annotating and taking longer-form notes in reading notebooks to engage more deeply with texts and other readers;
- Investigate power dynamics, power systems, and sources of power through theoretical lenses.

The goal of this unit is to teach contemporary literature in a way that empowers our students as democratic readers and thinkers, and young activists.

BEND I ✦ Diving Into Textual and Emotional Complexity

1. Seeking and Reading Reviews to Deepen Understanding
2. Read-Aloud: Being Alert to Mirrors and Windows, Even While Losing Oneself in a Novel
3. Turning Readers' Identities into Interpretive Lenses
4. Read-Aloud: Analytic Summaries for Complicated Narratives
5. Personalizing Writing about Reading and Reading Response: A Mentor Text Inquiry
6. Readers Look Deeper into Parts that at First Seem Obscure
7. Readers Reflect, Set Goals, and Promote Their Novels

BEND II ✦ Critical Literacy Lenses to Investigate Power

8. Digital Read-Aloud: Mapping Power across the Narrative
9. Attending to Subtle Power Interactions and Microaggressions
10. Analyzing Code-Switching to Negotiate Power
11. Clubs Harness the Power of Introverts and Extroverts
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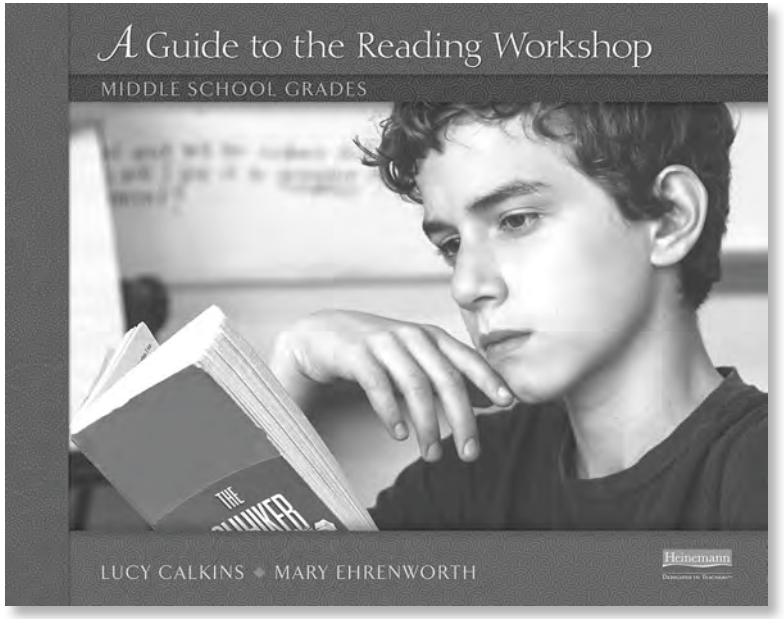

OVERVIEW AND CONTENTS

A Guide to the Reading Workshop
Middle School Grades

LUCY CALKINS ✦ MARY EHRENWORTH

This important resource describes the essential principles, methods, and structures of effective reading workshop instruction.

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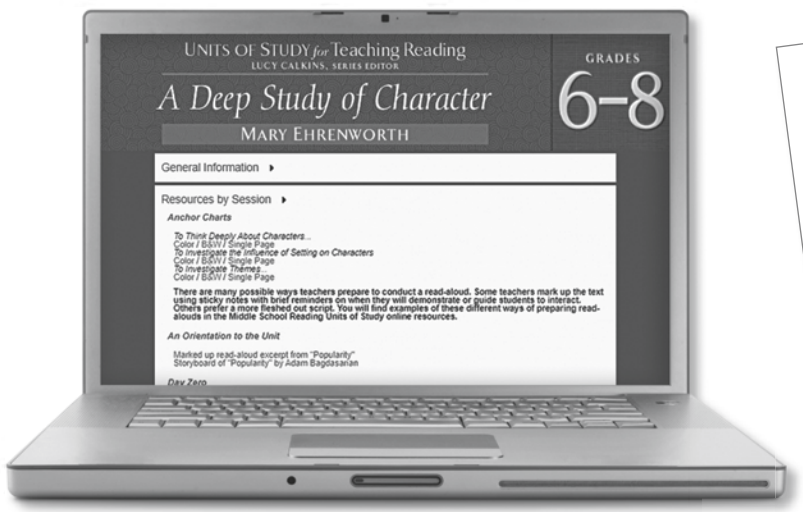
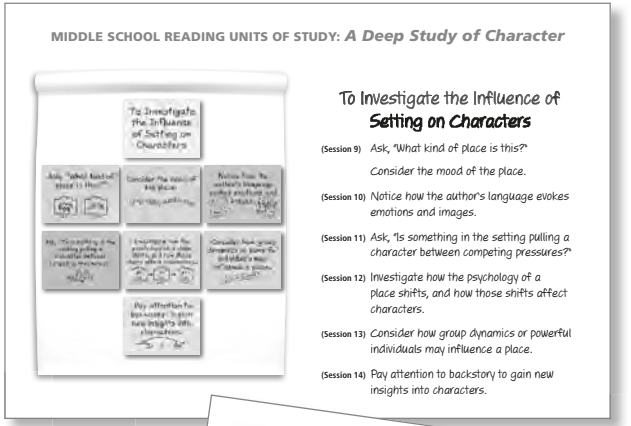
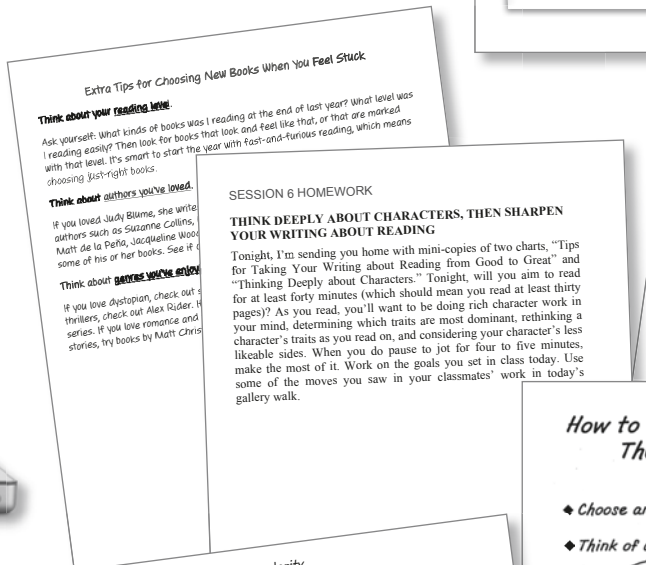
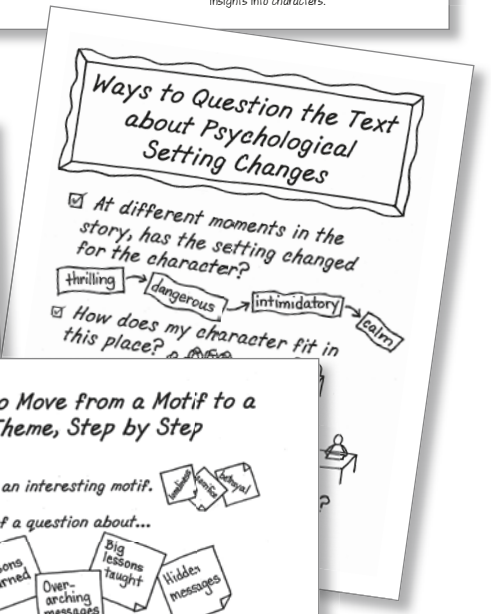
Online Resources for Teaching Reading

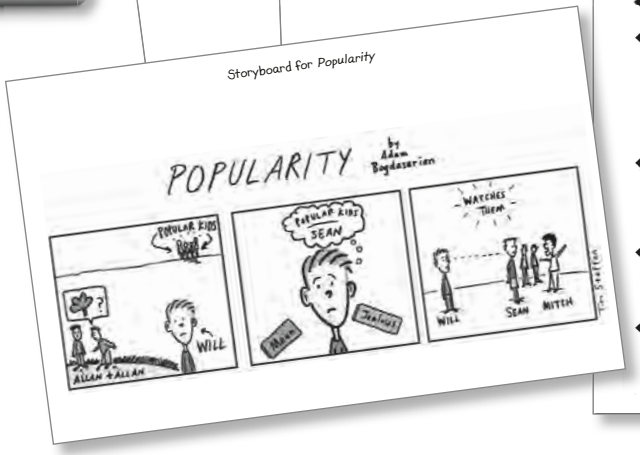
Grade-specific online resources support teaching throughout the school year. This rich assortment of instructional tools includes downloadable, printable files for anchor charts, student exemplars, checklists, Spanish translations of many resources, and more.

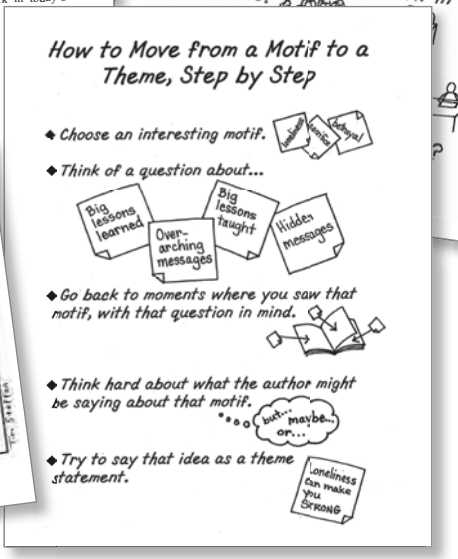












For additional information visit **www.UnitsofStudy.com**

Session 1

Read-Aloud

Investigating Multiple Character Traits

GETTING READY

- ✔ Prior to today's session, you will need to study your assessment data, channel students toward independent reading books that they can read with high comprehension, and help each get onto a course of study (e.g., historical fiction or a series), which they may share with a partner who will be reading the same books or similar books. See "Letter to Teachers—Day Zero" for more details.
- ✔ Choose your read-aloud (here it is "Popularity" by Adam Bagdasarian, from *First French Kiss*). Prepare your read-aloud by noting places in the text where you will demonstrate a strategy or prompt students to practice that strategy. Anticipate the coaching or feedback you'll give to students as they try the work.
- ✔ Convene students for the read-aloud, each sitting beside his or her partner and each with a few Post-its and a reading notebook they can place these in. For now, expect that some students may jot during the read-aloud and others won't, but they will all jot a Post-it or two during reading time (see Link and Conducting the Read-Aloud).
- ✔ In instances when students anticipate the work you would otherwise be coaching toward, prepare to give feedback that celebrates what they are already doing (see Conducting the Read-Aloud).
- ✔ Prepare to record students' thinking on oversized Post-its you display on chart paper titled, "Will's Character Traits in 'Popularity'" (see Conducting the Read-Aloud).
- ✔ Display Bend I anchor chart, "To Think Deeply about Characters" (see Conducting the Read-Aloud).
- ✔ Be prepared to give some comments as you "lean-in" while students read independently (see Independent Reading).

IN THIS SESSION

TODAY YOU'LL read aloud the first half of "Popularity" by Adam Bagdasarian, from *First French Kiss*. You will teach students that subtle details can give a lot of information about a character, especially about their traits.

TODAY YOUR STUDENTS will spend most of the session participating in the read-aloud, and then spend a brief time reading a book they chose earlier. As they read, they'll identify character traits and capture their thinking on Post-its. Their Post-its will make visible the work they are doing musing over the best word to use for a specific trait.

CONNECTION

Introduce the work of read-aloud. Explain that you'll read aloud in such a way that you introduce new reading work, first demonstrating, then coaching as kids try it.

"Readers, today we dive into the work of turning you into ever-more powerful and expert readers. Here's how our reading work will go this year.

"For each unit, there will bends in the unit, like the mountain trail switchbacks that bikers and hikers use. Experienced climbers go up gradually, climbing diagonally in one direction, and then make a switchback into another direction. The bends in the path help them travel through harder and harder terrain. In the same way, you'll have bends in each unit of study, and each bend will put you on harder reading terrain.

"In this unit, you'll do the thinking work that all readers of novels do—a deep study of characters. This work is the heart of all reading work. Chances are, you've done some character work before, so you'll work on making your reading work more complex and sophisticated, like the novels that you're reading.

"Today, and most of the time, we'll begin each bend in our units of study with a read-aloud, and that text will be woven through later minilessons. Today, and during every read-aloud, I'll launch some new thinking work, demonstrate it, and then you'll try that work by talking with your partner.

"I'll listen in and coach from the sidelines, giving you feedback. Then you'll have a chance to transfer that same thinking to your own books."

Channel kids to orient themselves to the text and then to listen, attentive to details to discern character traits. Set them up to learn from the way you do the work.

"Today, we'll read and think about a short story by Adam Bagdasarian. It's a short story from a collection called *First French Kiss and Other Traumas*. If you skimmed this collection, you'd find out that the narrator in all the stories, the character who is telling the story, is named Will, and that in each story he's a slightly different age. In this story, Will is in fourth grade. It's called 'Popularity.'

"Readers, whenever you start a story, you want to plan your thinking work. Beginnings of stories, and especially beginnings of short stories, come at you quickly, so it helps to get ready by asking yourself, 'What sort of thinking will I be doing?' Think about what you imagine us doing at the start of this text."

After a moment, I said, "You'll never go wrong if you approach a story thinking about the people, the characters. Begin studying clues about characters' traits early in the story, paying close attention to small details. In the stories you're reading now, even the smallest detail about a character can give you insight.

"As I read, try to do this work, paying close attention to small details so you develop ideas about characters' traits. I'll do some thinking work aloud. Listen as I do this. Compare your thinking with mine."

Though this is a read-aloud, not a minilesson, we start with a connection. The principle that learners do better when they can connect new learning to what they already know holds true in read-aloud sessions as well.

When you explain how your reading work will go this year, you usher students into the community of your classroom. When students can predict how the work will go, they are freed up from trying to figure out the norms of the class and will have more energy to take on grander thinking work right away. If your students come from a reading workshop background, much of this explanation will be familiar to them.

Providing a brief text introduction like this can be especially supportive for English language learners and readers who read below benchmark.

Additional Sample Sessions
Please note that additional sample sessions for each unit are available for review here:
http://hein.pub/6-8-UOS-Samples

CONDUCTING THE READ-ALOUD

Read aloud the first excerpt of the story without pausing.

Popularity

Somewhere inside me I knew that ten-year-old boys were not supposed to spend their recess circling oak trees in search of four-leaf clovers. Still, that's what I and my equally unpopular acquaintances, Allan Gold and Allan Shipman, were doing while the rest of our classmates played tag and kickball and pushed each other higher and higher on the swings.

Aside from having a little more than our share of baby fat, the two Allans and I had very little in common. In fact, we could barely stand one another. Still, during recess we were the only company we had, so we tried to make the best of it. Now and then one of us would bend forward, pick a clover, examine it, shake his head, and let it fall to the ground.

"Got one," Allan Gold said.

"Let's see," Allan Shipman said.

Allan showed Allan the clover.

"That's only three."

"No, that's four. Right here. See?"

"That's not a whole leaf," Allan Shipman said sourly. "There's one leaf, two leafs, three leafs."

"Four leafs!"

"That's not a whole leaf!"

We had been looking for four-leaf clovers every school day for six months. And each of us knew exactly what he would do if he ever found one: he would hold the lucky clover tight in his hand, close his eyes, and wish he was so popular that he would never have to spend time with the other two again.

Demonstrate how you consider the character's dominant traits. Show a willingness to ponder, exaggerating how you are thinking back over the story and weighing preliminary ideas.

"Let's work on Will's character traits. Think alongside me. Hmm, . . . I think one trait that emerges is that he's *bitter* about hunting for clovers, don't you think? Let me think about evidence for that." I reread a bit muttering, "Will said, um, what was it . . ." Referencing the text, I reread, in a snarky, unhappy voice:

My equally unpopular acquaintances . . . during recess we were the only company we had . . . for six months!

"It doesn't sound like Will has accepted being with the Allans. The way he talks about them, and this clover picking . . . it sounds *bitter*. Hmm, . . . Is it bitter, or *sarcastic*? I'm not sure. I'll write both terms." I jotted on one oversized Post-it:

Bitter–or sarcastic?

There is a big difference between "Watch me while I think about . . ." and "Think alongside me." When you can, invite students to take an active role in the lesson, even if you simply ask them to think with you while you demonstrate a strategy.

Step out of the role of reader to explain that you *could* stop your teaching there, but instead, you and your readers can push yourselves to do even more thinking, aware that characters are complex.

"We could stop there. The work I did is work you need to do as you read, and especially the work you need to do as you start new books. You'll definitely want to think about the traits of the characters in your books—and to do as I did, thinking carefully about the precise word for whatever it is you are thinking.

"But here's the thing. Will might be bitter, he might be sarcastic—but he's also other things. In the kinds of books you're reading, characters are complicated. Even in this first scene, we should consider if there are other possible character traits for Will. What else were you thinking about Will? Any thoughts of other traits? Turn and talk to your partner."

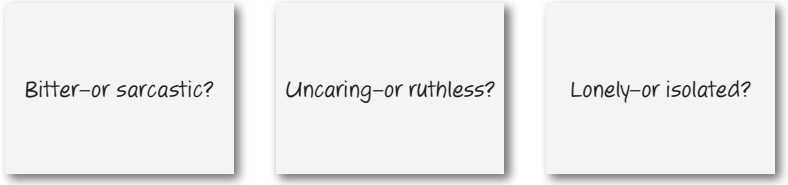
Listen in and coach students to provide evidence for their ideas and to use specific, literary words for traits. Coach so that other students can overhear and benefit, so they become stronger partners.

In one partnership, a student explained that Will seemed *lonely*. I said to her partner, "Do you agree? Talk back to each other's ideas, and give evidence for your points. Nudge each other to consider more than one possible term for a character trait."

Another student said that Will seemed *mean* in how he planned to abandon the Allans. I whispered to her partner, "Coach her to consider other possible words to use. There are twenty shades of mean. Ask her to clarify whether he is just a little mean—uncaring, or more mean—unkind. Or is he ruthless?"

Debrief, naming the work you did as a series of replicable transferable steps. Readers notice how small details suggest larger character traits.

"Readers, I heard you use some other words to describe some of Will's possible character traits. One partnership was talking about whether Will is *lonely*, or is the best word *isolated*?" I jotted those two terms on a second enlarged Post-it. "Is he *uncaring* or *ruthless*?"



"What's great about the work you just did is that you thought about small details in the story, and how those are suggestive of Will's possible traits. The story never actually says, 'and so this shows that Will was a sarcastic

Help students to lift the level of their partnership work right from the start. Keep your comments transferable. That is, give the kind of feedback that would benefit a partnership on another day, and speak so that other partnerships can overhear your feedback and benefit.

and lonely boy . . .' You did that thinking, instead. And you worked to find the precisely right term for character traits that aren't easily captured by one word."

Read on, inviting students to continue this work, analyzing character traits.

"Are you ready to gather more evidence for traits you have in mind, and to discern new ones if they arise? Maybe you can begin to weigh which traits seem strongest—because there's the most evidence for them.

"You'll have to decide if you want to jot as you listen, or hold details in your head. Some readers love to jot to hold onto details. Others lose the story if they are writing. You decide.

"The main thing is to be thinking hard about what Will says, what he does, and what he thinks, and what these details reveal about him." Then I read aloud from the text:

"Got one!" Allan Shipman said.

Allan Gold swiped the clover from him. "One, two, three," he said, throwing it to the ground.

"There's four there! That was a four-leaf clover! Pick it up!"

"You pick it up!"

"You pick it up!"

"You!"

"You!"

While the two Allans faced off, I looked across the black tar and asphalt at a crowd of boys who were making more noise and seemed to be having more fun than anyone else on the playground. These were the popular boys, and in the center of this group stood their leader, Sean Owens.

Sean Owens was the best student in the fourth grade. He was also one of the humblest, handsomest, strongest, fastest, most clear-thinking ten-year-olds that God ever placed on the face of the earth. Sean Owens could run the fifty-yard dash in six seconds, hit a baseball two hundred feet, and throw a football forty yards. The only thing Sean didn't have was a personality. He didn't need one. When you can hit a baseball two hundred feet, all you have to do is round the bases and wait for the world's adulation.

I gazed at Sean and the rest of the popular boys in bewildered admiration. It seemed like only yesterday that we had all played kickball, dodgeball, and basketball together; and then one morning I awoke to find that this happy democracy had devolved into a monarchy of kings and queens, dukes and duchesses, lords and ladies. It did not take a genius to know that, upon the continent of this playground, the two Allans and I were stableboys.

I had been resigned to my rank for many months, but now, looking at the two Allans (still arguing over the same three-leaf clover), then at the popular boys, I suddenly knew that I could not stand another day at the bottom. I wanted to be a part of the noise and the laughter; I wanted, I *needed*, to be popular.

Prompt partners to compare their thinking about traits, and their evidence for their ideas.

"Readers, before you talk, get your best thinking about character traits ready, not just your first thinking." I gave students a moment to gather their thoughts. "Go ahead, compare with a partner. What traits do you see as being strongest so far? What's your evidence?"

As partners talked, I coached different readers to push their discussions in two directions—from traits to evidence—and from details to how details suggest a trait.

One student was explaining to her partner that Will's strongest character trait so far is his bitterness. I said, "Do you have evidence that Will is bitter? What makes you say that?"

I listened in to another partnership discussing the way Will speaks. I said, "Hmm, . . . you seem to be talking about the words Will used about duchesses and courts . . . so what word would you use to describe him?"

Summarize to help all students, and then give them short, focused feedback to lift the level of their talk in partnerships, often in the form of a tip.

"Readers, let me gather you back. I heard some of you say that the way Will talks about Sean *is* bitter and I love the way you are reading on, holding your initial ideas in mind and collecting more evidence around those ideas. I also like that you thought about many sides of Will. I heard one of you say that Will seems *clever*, the way he talks about kids in the playground being like kings and queens and duchesses and stable boys. When you think you've found a word, ask yourself if it is the precisely right one. Is he clever or observant? Or both? Either way, I'm glad you see that sometimes a new scene helps us gather new ideas.

"Here's a tip to help you raise the level of your thinking and talking. Sometimes when your partner says something smart, something you agree with, here's what you're doing." I mimed nodding.

"My suggestion is do less nodding and more, 'What in the text makes you say that?!' Ask your partner to show you the relevant details in the story. Demand evidence, readers!"

Ready readers to go on, reminding them to raise the level of their work by supporting their ideas with specific text evidence.

"Right, readers, let's read on, and be ready to talk about your ideas . . . and your evidence."

Being ten years old, I did not question this ambition, but I did wonder how on earth I was going to realize it. Though I only stood twenty yards from the heart of the kingdom, I felt a thousand miles removed from the rank and prestige of its citizens. How could I bridge such a gap, knowing I might be stared at, or laughed at, or belittled to a speck so small that I could no longer be seen by the naked eye? And as I stood on that playground, torn between fear and ambition, those twenty yards began to recede from view, and I knew that I must either step forward now, or retreat forever to a life of bitter companions and three-leaf clovers.

I took a deep breath and then, with great trepidation, crossed the twenty longest yards I had ever walked in my life and found myself standing a few feet from the outer circle of what I hoped was my destiny. I lowered my head a little, so as not to draw attention to myself, and watched and listened.

Mitch Brockman, a lean, long-faced comic, considered by many to be the funniest boy in the fourth grade, was in the middle of a story that had something to do with Tijuana

and a wiener mobile. I wasn't sure what the story was about, but there was a lot of body English and innuendo, all of which the crowd seemed to find absolutely hilarious.

I noticed that every time Mitch said something funny, he eyed Sean Owens to see if he was laughing. He was. Silently. His mouth was open, but it was the laughter of the other boys that filled the silence. I realized then that Mitch was Sean's jester. As long as he could make Sean laugh, he was assured a prominent position in the group.

I wondered what *my* position in the group might be. I certainly wasn't a great athlete, student, or ladies' man, but I did have a sense of humor. Maybe I could be the *second*-funniest boy in the fourth grade. My thoughts went no further because the bell ending recess rang. But that night, just before I fell asleep, I saw myself standing in the center of the popular boys telling the funniest stories anyone had ever heard. I saw Sean Owens doubled up with laughter. I saw myself triumphant.

I returned to the group every recess, for three days. I stood, unnoticed, just outside the outer circle, waiting for my moment, for the one joke or wisecrack that would make me popular. I knew that I would only get one chance to prove myself, and that if I failed, I would be sent back to the stables. And so, with the single-mindedness of a scientist, I listened to the jokes the other boys made, hoping to align my comic sensibilities with theirs. Now and then I found myself on the verge of saying something, but every time I opened my mouth to speak, Mitch would launch into another routine, and my moment passed, and I had to resign myself to yet another day in the dark.

I did not know then that popularity has a life span, and that Mitch's time was about to run out.

First, retell the part of the story to support students' thinking about new traits. Then, invite them to compare their thinking with partners.

"Readers, this part is interesting, right? It feels like we're seeing a new side of Will here—how he watches for days, studying Mitch, Owen, and the boys like a scientist . . . fascinating! What do you think? Do you see any new traits emerging? What words would you use for those traits? Think for a second to prepare for your conversation with your partner. What words would you use to describe Will? What details support your thinking?" I waited for a moment, then said: "Now compare with your partner!"

Listen in, and give some feedback that strengthens partner talk.

I turned to one partner and said, "Your partner said Will seems determined here . . . remember, don't just nod. Go ahead and ask, 'What makes you say that?'"

To another student I said, "You're saying that Will seems *observant*. I bet that's a word you've been using in science. It's true, it feels like he's watching these kids like they are a science experiment. Fascinating! It's great that you're using such a specific word for his trait. Find out if your partner agrees."

I overheard another student describing Will as *fake*. To her partner I said, "Find out what she means by that, that she thinks Will is fake. Demand evidence!"

Record and share students' observations.

"Readers, here are some traits you're naming." I gestured to the chart on which I'd collected some of their overheard conversations. "We'll keep these initial traits in mind as we continue to learn about Will."

As partners talk, you can help them use more literary language. So, if a student says that Will seems to know that popularity is fleeting, you might suggest, "Oh, so you think he's conflicted?" As in, he wants to be popular even though he knows it won't last?" Often, kids have sophisticated ideas, but don't have the vocabulary to express them.

Will's Character Traits in "Popularity"

Bitter—or sarcastic?	Clever—or observant?	Uncaring—or ruthless?	Determined—or??

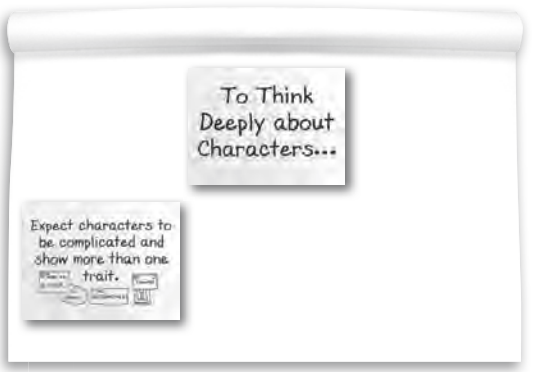
Reveal the anchor chart for this bend, then wrap up with a recap of students' reading work and partnership work.

"Let's summarize the work you've done so far today." I revealed our anchor chart and read aloud the bullet point.

ANCHOR CHART

To Think Deeply about Characters . . .

- **Expect characters to be complicated and show more than one trait.**



"In your work as readers, you're doing three significant things. First, you're not satisfied with your first thinking and first trait. Instead, you keep thinking and theorizing, asking yourself, 'What new traits are emerging here?' Second, you're considering your partner's ideas as well, and realizing that readers see different things in the same story. That's the beauty of collective interpretation. And third, you are demanding evidence. No more nodding. Instead I'm hearing, 'What in the text makes you say that?!'"

LINK

Channel students to read independently, trying this work in their own books.

"You have about ten minutes to try this work in your own books. As you read, collect a Post-it or two about characters that interest you in your book. Maybe read for a few minutes and pause to jot—or you might reread a bit, jot a Post-it, and then read on. Either way, I recommend your jots be in the form of questions, as we did with 'Bitter—or sarcastic?' Try to think of more than one side to a character.

"But mostly, *read!* It should look like books in hands, you bent over them, and a quiet room."

Just as we do in minilessons, we end read-aloud sessions with a link. We tuck new learning into students' repertoires, and we give them a tip or two to fuel their independent reading time.

INDEPENDENT READING

Getting the Work of the Unit Up and Running with Lots of Energy

Soon, you'll plan deliberate reading conferences, working with one student or pulling together three or four students for strategic small-group work. Right now, though, you don't have much time because the read-aloud will have been much longer than a usual minilesson. Also, all your students need to feel your attention. That means you'll want to circulate rapidly, getting to as many students as you can.

Although you will have already helped channel kids to books they can read, be sure that you continue to keep an eye on that now. Remember that at the start of the year, it helps for kids to choose what they'll refer to as an "easy book." You will want them moving through books rapidly. It's not going to help a reader who reads at levels R–S to carry around Harry Potter, Book 7, for eight weeks like a giant paperweight. You might note the books kids have chosen, remarking on their choices, giving help if any kid seems to have chosen poorly. The rule of thumb is that kids should be able to read about ¾ of a page a minute, so if you see a student who is still on page 1 after five minutes of reading, that should sound alarms.

You'll also want to stir up enthusiasm for students' early character work. Look for signs that readers are approximating the work you've taught, like a Post-it note with words that capture a character's possible traits.

As you circulate, keep in mind that your goal is to make the kids feel visible, and to stir up enthusiasm for reading and for the new character work. Some comments that might help with this work follow.

"Lean-in" Comments about Book Choices

- I love that book! I can't wait to hear what you think about it!
- I love that author! Let me know how that book is. I haven't yet read it.
- That book has a lot of people talking about it. You'll have to let us know what you think.
- There's a movie based on that book, isn't there? It will be interesting to see how they compare.
- Is that book part of a series? Is it the first one?
- I wanted to read that, but it looked a little hard. Tell me how it goes.
- Oh, I'd like to read that too. Maybe we could make a little book club on it.

"Lean-in" Comments about Early Character Work

- You already noticed one trait your character displayed! What's your best evidence?
- Wow! Your character must be incredibly complicated. You've already found three character traits!
- Two traits! I bet you're already thinking about which trait is stronger, right?
- Oh, that's interesting. I wonder if that will turn out to be more of an emotion in this scene, or a trait across the story.

SHARE

Ask readers to share which character they find most intriguing in their novels—and then prepare to continue this thinking as they read tonight.

"You're all deep into reading, so we just have a moment for a share. Briefly, tell your partner about the character you are finding most interesting in your novel so far, and share some of your early thoughts about the character. You might draw on one of your Post-its as you talk.

"Then put a couple of blank Post-its in your book, stuck inside the cover, so tonight, as you read on, you'll be ready to note where you find signs of interesting character traits."

SESSION 1 HOMEWORK

KEEP TRACK OF HOW MUCH YOU READ—AND JOT NOTES ON CHARACTER TRAITS

Tonight, get lots of reading done. Plan to read for *at least* thirty minutes (keep going if you're loving your book). For tonight, would you also capture how many pages you read in thirty minutes? That will help you with goal-setting later. Then, of course, keep reading if you're in a reading zone. Keep track of where you start tonight and the page on which you end, and the number of minutes you read.

As you read, notice when you are learning about character traits and make sure you continue to jot the most interesting traits on Post-its. Tuck these into your book or into your reading notebook.

Session 12

Using a Continuum to Track the Fairness of Research

GETTING READY

- ✔ Students will need their completed homework from the previous night. They should sit with their partner in the meeting area (see Connection).
- ✔ You'll need chart paper and Post-its to display a continuum of texts and sources (see Teaching).
- ✔ Be prepared to add on to the "Ethical Researchers . . ." anchor chart (see Link).
- ✔ "Supporting Students with Independence in Homework" conferring table (see Conferring and Small-Group Work).

IN THIS SESSION

TODAY you'll teach students that researchers keep careful track of their sources. When researching multiple sides of an argument, they often keep track of sources along a continuum so they can assess the fairness of their research.

TODAY YOUR STUDENTS will first share the homework they set themselves. Then they'll practice tracking sources along a continuum by placing a source about free speech on a continuum. As they research today, they'll keep track of texts and sources along their own continuum. Study groups will not meet.

MINILESSON

CONNECTION

Invite students to share the homework they did last night. Notice which students are successful with setting and completing independent homework tasks, so you can support those who need it in conferences and small groups.

"Researchers, last night you set your own homework. Will you get out the work you did, and share it with your partner?"

As students did so, I circulated, noting kids who were beginning to do more significant homework, and kids who still needed support with this essential study habit.

Additional Sample Sessions
Please note that additional sample sessions for each unit are available for review here:
http://hein.pub/6-8-UOS-Samples

"Researchers, I see that some of you found new sources for your study group last night, and some of you went back to sources that you had previewed while you were building background knowledge. Let's take a moment to think ahead now, to the flash-debate you'll give at the end of this bend, and to the more formal TED talk you'll give for our final unit celebration. When you give those talks, you'll want to refer to your sources not just by title or author, you'll also refer to what this source contributes to this argument."

✤ **Name the teaching point.**

"Today I want to teach you that researchers are careful to keep track of their sources. When researching multiple sides of an argument, it's often helpful to keep track of sources along a continuum that will allow you to assess the balance of sources in your research."

TEACHING

Demonstrate how you create and use a continuum to keep track of your sources for your demonstration argument on freedom of speech.

"Let me show you what this looks like. In our last session, I refined the position I'm researching to:"

> High school students' freedom of expression should be protected yet limited while in school.

"So that means I could make a continuum that goes from one side of the argument to the other.

"I think that's my continuum. I was going to make it range from 'absolutely protected' to 'not protected' but yesterday I realized that really, the argument is 'mostly protected' versus 'limited.' I can always add 'not protected' to the continuum if I find some sources that argue that.

"Sometimes a text is arguing just one side of the argument, making it relatively easy to place on this continuum. I think I'll use blue Post-its for texts, and I'll put the Post-it toward one side or the other of the continuum depending on where I think that text falls.

"Now here is what's tricky. Most of the time, the texts I'm reading aren't making the same argument I am, or even necessarily making any argument. The texts are providing a lot of information. So what I'll have to do is really look inside the text, to see if any sources—groups, or people—may fall more on one side or the other of this continuum. I think I'll use green Post-its for people, or groups.

"Let's consider the article 'High School Tells Student to Remove Antiwar Shirt.' This is one of those informational texts, one that provides a lot of information, but doesn't take a side. Let's read through it and see if there are people or groups inside this text that seem strongly on one side or the other of this continuum." I displayed the text and skimmed, moving my finger down it, saying parts aloud.

"Okay, I'll try placing the student, Bretton Barber. It seems to me that Bretton Barber falls strongly on the 'free speech should be protected' side. Bretton wore a provocative T-shirt to school, one that criticized the president. And he did it knowingly. He quoted *Tinker v Des Moines*. He was willing to argue his case. He knows his case law, he is practicing freedom of expression, and he's an activist."

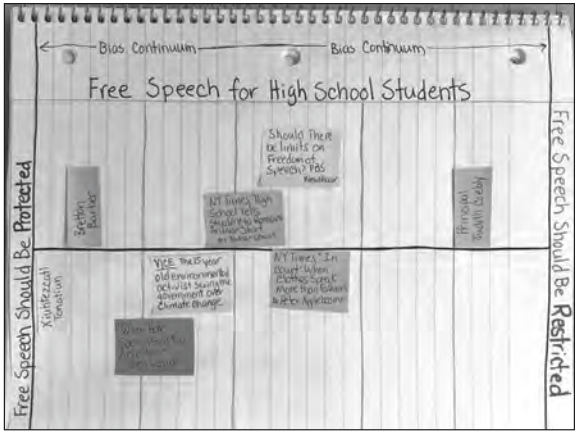
I made as if to put a green Post-it with *Bretton Barber* all the way to the far left of my continuum. Then I paused. "Though there is one thing—Bretton backed down when his principal misquoted *Tinker v Des Moines*—he didn't want to get in *too* much trouble. So I'm going to put him *almost* all the way over to the left."

I placed a green Post-it on which I had written *Bretton Barber* near the side of my continuum that said, "Should be absolutely protected."

FIG. 12–1 During Marc's read-aloud, as kids turn and talk, he moves in and listens to them.

Recap the steps you followed, reminding students that the text itself often won't explicitly fall on one side or the other of a continuum. Tell students they will need to read closely and infer.

"Readers, do you see how I wasn't expecting the text to just come out and say, 'This shows that Bretton was a strong defender of freedom of speech!' Instead, I had to think about the boy's actions and his words. I reread to think about evidence. Then I placed him on this continuum."



ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

Engage students in practicing this work with another source inside this text, the principal, Ms. Coebly.

"Researchers, try this out with your partner. Where would you put Principal Coebly on this continuum—and why?"

As students skimmed the article, I voiced over, "Think about her words as well as her actions."

Soon students were arguing to put Principal Coebly on the far right of the continuum, because she showed strong evidence through her actions and words that she felt students' free speech rights should be limited.

Give one more tip—it's important to note the original source—the text or video, so that researchers can find it and refer back to it, accurately, later on when writing, discussing, or presenting.

"Writers, I'm going to give you one important tip; when you defend your position in your flash-debates, and then later on, when you give your more formal TED talks, you're going to want to be able to refer to these sources accurately. An easy way to keep track of which articles or texts your sources come from is to write the name of the article on the back of these Post-its. If I do that, I'll be able to say something like, 'Bretton Barber, a high school student quoted in the *New York Times* article, "High School Tells Student to Remove Antiwar Shirt," is a strong advocate of protected free speech. He . . .'"

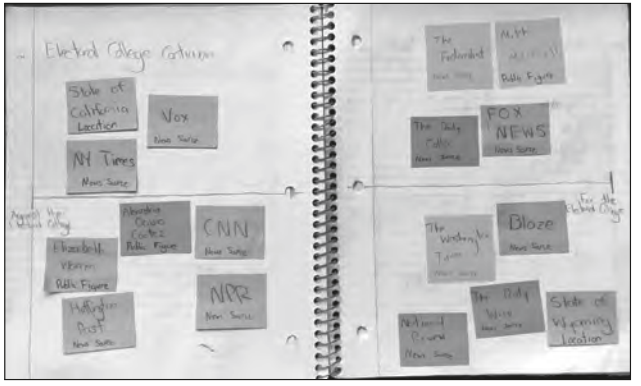


FIG. 12–2 The "voting rights" study group (Adam and Alan) keep meticulous track of the fairness of their research by starting a continuum in their notebook.

LINK

Send students off, clarifying how they'll incorporate this work into their research. Set expectations for volume of reading and note-taking.

"Before you begin your research today, start a continuum page in your notebook. You might take a moment to jot some Post-its for any texts or sources you've read that you can already place on this continuum. Then as you do new research, along with taking notes, keep track of resources along this continuum.

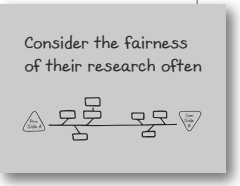
"Researchers, there is one logical consequence of this work. If you are noticing that most of your texts and sources are falling just along one side of your continuum, it will be important that you seek out resources for the other side. Ethical researchers want to make sure they are considering multiple points of view. It does not mean you have to take into account equal numbers on every side—sometimes you'll discover that there just isn't that much evidence to support one side or the other—but it's important to take note of the sources you are using, where they stand, and where your research stands.

"At some point, you can combine your research with that of your study group, and you'll have an incredible resource as you prepare for your TED talk. Off you go. You won't meet with study groups today, but you will get a chance to compare your research with a partner later. I expect most of you are going back into a second or third text today, and that you are probably on a second page of notes as well. You can use our anchor chart to remind you of the work you're doing." I added on to our anchor chart.

ANCHOR CHART

Ethical Researchers . . .

- Discern arguments and disputes inside of their research topic by . . .
  - returning to notes and texts
  - thinking about groups/sides/perspectives
  - wondering about pros and cons
- Research both sides of a topic fairly by . . .
  - acknowledging their emotional attachment to a side
  - considering their folk knowledge
  - being careful to research the opposite side extra fairly
- **Consider the fairness of their research often by . . .**
  - **using a continuum to keep track of texts and sources**
  - **considering what side of this continuum is more weighted**
  - **actively seeking sources along the continuum**



CONFERRING AND SMALL-GROUP WORK

Supporting Students with Independence in Homework

IT IS CRUCIAL for students' academic success that they learn to do homework in middle and high school. It's even better for them if they learn to set their own study goals, on top of or in addition to class assignments. Remember our research—kids who do a bit more outside of school do better academically. This does not mean spending a lot more time—it means smart, strategic work, like finding an article or video, rereading or going over notes, or talking about the topic. Take time today to coach kids in this work. We've found these conversations go best in intimate, one-on-one conversations. Sometimes you can harness social bonds—use your judgment. Here are some examples of conversations you might have.

Supporting Students with Independence in Homework
Helping kids find time and space to do homework in very busy lives—and to advocate for themselves
There are many kids who are a lot like us; over-scheduled, overwhelmed, and sometimes desperate with all they need to do. They have soccer practice, or a game that keeps them on the field and bus until 9 pm. Their parents have scheduled a family event on a night when they have lots of homework. They have assignments due in four classes and don't know what to prioritize or even literally how to fit it all in. You'll want to listen hard to these kids. First, ask about their other homework, and their schedule across the week. Jot a little weekly calendar, and study it with them. Find out about their tasks, their commitments. Then help them to lay out a reasonable work plan. And show them how to help each other with this ongoing time management. You'll also need to teach students to advocate for themselves. They may need to ask teachers to share homework assignments earlier, so they have more time to plan across the week. Students may sometimes need to ask for extensions, and they will need help writing respectful emails to teachers; you can start by helping them write a draft to you, to keep as needed. The main thing is to bring all your wisdom to help these students with the ongoing, crucial task of managing academic, social, and work lives.

Helping kids care about their own work—increasing engagement and esteem

You may also have students who seem to care little or less about their work. They may seem withdrawn or uninterested. They may appear careless and uncaring. Remember that no kids come to school wanting to not achieve. Life is hard for lots of kids. There may be stuff going on in their families or their friendships. They may have huge issues that we know little about. They may be in the throes of adolescent anxiety about things that feel so big when you are that age. Adolescence can be a horrifying time, and kids often have little power or control over their lives.

For these kids, there are a couple of tips we suggest. The first is—don't back off, don't go away. Sometimes kids are waiting to see if you'll retreat. Keep showing them you care. The second is—don't get mad. Don't take their seeming lack of commitment personally. Stick with the message that you care about them learning to do homework, because you care about them.

Offer support in a variety of ways. You might open your classroom so kids can stay and do homework before they leave school, or when they arrive, or during lunch. You might help them find mentors—harness an older student, or another athlete for an athlete, or band member for band member. You might call home and say you see glimpses of this student's potential and you are eager to help him or her grow, and enlist family partners to encourage signs of interest or work.

Showing interested students how to do strategic additional work

Seek out students who seem especially interested in this class or in the topic. Remember to not only draw in students who are already intellectual powerhouses, but seek out the secret geeks, and the ones who are beginning to seem super interested. Sometimes you can role-play kids into the academic identities you want for them.

Gather these kids, and remind them that research shows that kids who do even a little more outside of school end up doing very well academically. That little bit of extra work changes students' relationship with teachers. It changes their relationship with the content. And it can change their relationship with each other. You might engage these kids in listing a few things that can make a difference, in this study and in any class, such as:

- Visiting a museum or exhibition
- Talking to adults about the topic
- Reading and watching nonfiction around the topic
- Reading fiction and watching films around the topic
- Talking to other students

You're helping these kids build bonds with other students, you're helping then deepen their content knowledge and their study habits, and mostly, you're pointing them into an academic identity.

SHARE

Addressing Fairness in Research

Advise partners to look over the continuum they each have made, to decide if they have sources from a broad enough set of stances.

"Researchers, when you meet with your partner to compare your research and the continuum you each made, will you look at where your Post-its are tending to fall? You should be able to see if your research has reached beyond a small segment of your continuum. It's tricky, because having *more* sources on a side doesn't mean those sources are more evidence-based. Still, an imbalance will alert you that you should talk with your group to see why it's like that, to see if you have more work to do.

"You'll end up on one side of this argument, but you want to make sure it's an informed position. Use your best judgment to decide if you have understood the different arguments and weighed them fairly, as you get closer to coming to your own considered position."

FIG. 12–3 This "immigration" study group innovates using a continuum to track groups, individuals, and forces.

SESSION 12 HOMEWORK

MAKING PLANS TO GROW YOUR BODY OF RESEARCH

Tonight, once again, set your own homework. Your choices include:

- reading or watching a text, adding the text or source information to your continuum, and taking some notes as or after you read
- contributing to your study group (finding a new text, making a study tool)
- collecting vocabulary
- going back into your notes and adding annotations
- writing long to reflect.

Session 2

Filling in the Backstory

IN THIS SESSION

TODAY YOU'LL teach students that readers of historical fiction learn not only the evolving story as they read, but also the backstory of both the protagonist and the historical times in which the story is set.

TODAY YOUR STUDENTS will have a long stretch of reading time—perhaps half an hour—and they'll continue the important work that readers do as they start a historical fiction novel. They'll get to know the characters and figure out what's going on, coming to understand more of the backstory behind both the characters' lives and the historical context and jotting super-abbreviated timelines to keep track of the unfolding story (and backstories). You can take time to check in with students about their reading volume, gathering a few into a small group as needed to give support. Readers will have time for a brief club meeting today.

GETTING READY

- ✔ Display the "Readers of Historical Fiction Ask . . ." anchor chart and prepare to add to it (see Connection and Link).
- ✔ Provide each club with Post-it notes to use when constructing timelines (see Active Engagement).
- ✔ Access Character strand of "Bands of Text Complexity in Literature" to help students tackle the work in their band of text complexity (see Conferring and Small-Group Work).
- ✔ Prepare chart paper to jot a few questions to help students think about how to have the best club discussions (see Share).
- ✔ Make sure clubs have a place to keep their folders to accumulate their resources and shared tools in (see Share).

MINILESSON

CONNECTION

Channel students to talk about what's happening in their novels. Be sure your invitation is open ended—just ask, "What's happening?" without further instructions.

Additional Sample Sessions
Please note that additional sample sessions for each unit are available for review here:
http://hein.pub/6-8-UOS-Samples

"As usual, readers, will you sit with your club when you come to the meeting area? Today, you'll be talking not just with your partner but with all the members of your club." Students began to assemble. "As we wait for everyone to join us, will you take a second to remind your club members of what has happened so far in your club book?"

I listened as students talked, and then convened the class.

Point out that some students talked about the character, some about the situation, and that historical fiction readers need to be keeping both in the forefront of their minds as they read.

"Readers, here's what I'm noticing: when I asked you to talk with your club about what has happened so far in your book, some of you are thinking especially about our first question: 'What kind of person is the main character?' You've been thinking what the main character says and does, and how this shows the kind of person he or she is.

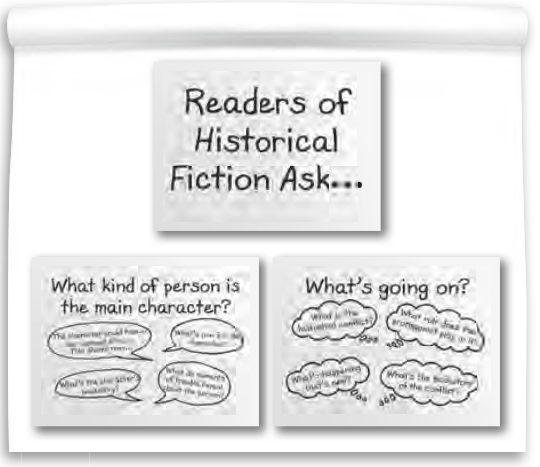
"Meanwhile, others of you have been thinking more about the second question"—I gestured to the bullet, 'What's going on?'—"and you were just talking about events in the historical world in which your story is set.

"Will you think for a moment about whether your first instinct was to think about the personal storyline of your main character, or whether you thought more about the larger events occurring in the world of your story, in the situation?" I let there be twenty seconds of silence.

"I'm asking you to think about whether you tend to be a big-picture or a personal-storyline kind of reader, because either way, when reading historical fiction, it's important to remember to push yourself to keep both things going in your mind most of the time. It's almost like you need to make two timelines as you read—the main character's timeline, and the historical timeline."

Name the teaching point.

"Today I want to teach you that as you read on in your book, you'll not only make two timelines—a personal and a historical one—but also, you'll add onto *both ends* of those timelines. Yes, you'll learn about new things that are happening in the evolving present, but you'll *also* learn about the backstory of both the people and of the situation."



TEACHING

Draw on a familiar novel to make the point that readers of historical fiction not only learn what's happening next on both the character's and the situation's timeline, they also learn backstory.

"Some of you know the book *Number the Stars* by Lois Lowry. On the very first page of that book, three girls are racing down a street in Copenhagen, and German soldiers who are on the street corner call '*Halte!*' As you read on, you follow the sequence of events in those characters' timeline: the girls stop, one of them (the Jewish girl) is especially nervous, they soon reach home and tell their parents . . . If you, as a reader, were making a little timeline in your mind of the events in these characters' lives, you could add the unfolding events onto the right side of their personal timeline.

"But the important thing is that meanwhile, as you read on in *Number the Stars*, you could also start to fill in the story of what happened *before* the German soldiers ordered those three girls to stop. Some of the events that happened before the book begins are personal: the big sister to two of the girls died somehow, just before her wedding day, one isn't sure how yet. Other events are historical: the German soldiers have been in Copenhagen for three years, goods (including coffee) have become restricted, brave Danish resisters have exploded factories that could have become suppliers for the Nazis." As I spoke, I made two small timelines.

We know that a lot of kids who come of age in elementary units of study know Number the Stars *from their fourth-grade* Historical Fiction Clubs *unit. If you know a more recent or otherwise famous book or movie (e.g.,* Titanic*), you can reference that.*

ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

Channel club members to co-construct Post-it timelines of their novels, adding to both the present and the past of two timelines—one showing the protagonist's evolution, the other showing history.

"I've put some Post-its in the middle of each of your clubs. Will you and your club members take a few minutes and see if you can make a super-quick timeline that shows the evolving stories of your people, and of your place? Be sure you are adding to both ends of your timeline, especially filling in some of the backstories of your novel."

After kids worked for a few minutes, I asked for their attention for just a minute. "I'm glad that some of you are thinking carefully about how tiny details in the story often reveal the backstory. For example, Walter Dean Myers never paused the story of *Patrol* to explicitly give us the backstory. He never came right out and said that the narrator has been in Vietnam for a while before this story occurred. But like all authors of historical fiction, Myers has the character's smallest actions be revealing ones. Remember this part?"

> *Shots! A firefight!*
>
> *I dive to the ground.*
>
> *My heart beats faster.*

"The text never comes right out and shows that the soldier had been there for months, but those actions show that he has learned to survive. I'm going to give you a chance to talk with your club again, but this time, before you do, will you

Your students will only make the barest start at these timelines before you need to move along in the minilesson, but even if they don't accomplish a lot, they will have had a taste of what this sort of thinking feels like and they'll be more apt to do this whenever they are reading their own novels.

take a second to reread a key part of your book? Just skim over it. But notice specific details that reveal the backstory of either the main character, or of the world in which the story is set."

LINK

Rally students to read their shared novels, drawing on all they have learned so far.

"Readers, I know you are eager to have some time to dive back into your novel. You'll have about half an hour to read today, so put your bookmark twenty to thirty pages ahead of where you are now, and push yourself to read at least that many pages. As you read, keep in mind that readers of historical fiction aren't just reading along on autopilot. You have tons of work to do, so you need to be alert to all that you're learning as you read." I added to the anchor chart.

ANCHOR CHART

Readers of Historical Fiction Ask . . .

- What kind of person is the main character?
  - The character could have . . . but instead s/he . . . This shows that . . .
  - **What's new for the character?**
  - **What's the character's backstory?**
- What's going on?
  - What is the historical conflict?
  - What role does the protagonist play in it?
  - **What's happening that's new?**
  - **What's the backstory of the conflict?**

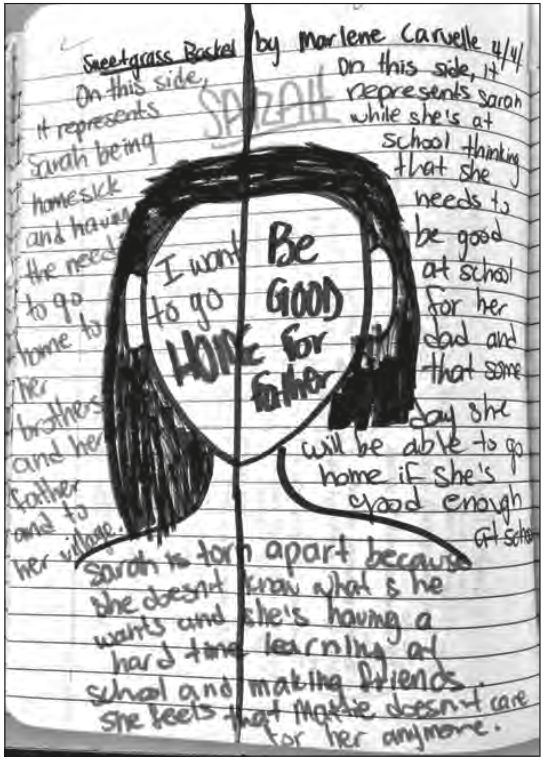


FIG. 2–1 This reader considers the different sides of her character, and how the character may be torn by internal conflict as well as by the historical conflict.

Helping Readers and Clubs Make Smart Reading Goals

YOU MAY WANT TO ASK KIDS to leave their reading logs, or whatever record they keep of their reading (see *A Guide to the Reading Workshop: Middle School Grades* for easy, kid-chosen options such as apps, calendars, etc.), open on their desks, so you can study them quickly as you circulate. Look for the page goals that clubs are setting, knowing that it's important for students to be in a reading zone of at least forty to sixty pages every day, across school and home. If your class has a strong reading ethic, then you may want that zone to be more like fifty to seventy pages, which is about twenty-five pages in class and another twenty-five at home.

So, first, check any club that is setting page goals that seem small, and gather them close. "I'm worried about your reading life," you might say. "One danger of reading with a club is that it can slow your reading down too much, if you're not careful. Adult clubs don't go like that. When you go to college, you come to class each week, having already read the whole story or play. When you're in an adult book club, you usually come having read the whole novel. In your book clubs, your volume doesn't have to be that high—you don't have to read the whole book before coming to class next—but you want to be closer to an adult model. So, can you rethink your goals, looking for the closest chapter ending that will keep you in a reading zone of about forty to sixty pages across the day and night, as many days a week as you can? That may mean you need more time for reading and less for talking or writing. Figure it out, and I'll come back in a few minutes to see your new plan." Then, make yourself a note to check back in with these readers regularly, even to text them or call them, to help them meet these more ambitious goals.

Next, you might gather your strongest readers, the ones who read dozens of pages a night, who devour books. Pull these readers together, and suggest that they ask themselves, "Is my book club reading fulfilling my independent reading life?" Chances are, unless these readers are all in one club, that it's not. If they are in a club together, then suggest they read as ambitiously together as they do alone. Assuming they are not, then you might suggest that avid readers often find they need an additional, independent book, to fulfill their independent reading life. Then, they have choices. They could each choose an independent book they love, and that will be their weekend and pleasure reading. Or, they could each choose another historical fiction book, to deepen their knowledge of the genre. Or, they could even choose a series of historical fiction books together, and have a "dark ops" book club that meets in the shadow of their regular book club! The main thing is that you inspire these avid readers to take care of their reading life while they also read with a club.

Finally, you'll have a few readers whom you are worried about, because historical fiction is hard, and perhaps these readers were just getting going with a series that was helping them read more, something like Dragon Slayers' Academy or Diary of a Wimpy Kid. These readers, too, need another book, in fact, a whole series, going, while they read for their club. For these readers, worry less about their club volume, and more about their independent reading volume. Helping these kids move up levels of text complexity is going to happen because they read hundreds of pages, steadily working through series. Make yourself a note that you'll want to return to these readers with some small-group work to help them tackle the work in their band of text complexity (see the online resources for support for character work across Bands of Text Complexity). For now, make sure they have additional books in hand, series on tap, and partners to talk with and encourage each other.

You may also notice a few students who are lagging in their reading because they don't seem swept up in their novels. If this were a different unit—if the kids weren't reading as a club in books for which you need to have multiple copies—you'd probably counsel those readers toward different books. That's obviously not an easy option in this situation, so you'll need to work on building enthusiasm for the books that you do have. The easiest way to help those readers get connected to their novels is to read a page or two of the book aloud to them, doing so in ways that draw them into the text. If you have an audio version of the text, you might see if you can find a way for them to listen to the first chapter together. Sometimes it works to ask kids to read portions of the first chapter to each other—some kids love that invitation. And always, you can simply talk about the drama of the book in ways that draw them into it. Read trailers on the back covers of books as your mentor text!

SHARE

Clubs Talk About Their Work—And How They Are Working As A Club

Suggest club members talk first about how to be supportive club mates for each other, and then encourage them to talk about their co-constructed timelines of their shared novel.

"Readers, today for the first time, you'll have a chance to talk with your whole club about the book that you are reading. Before you talk about your book, take just a moment to actually talk about the club. You've all been in lots of book clubs, and in lots of other sorts of small groups, and I'm pretty sure you have ideas about what makes these interactions work, and what makes them not work. Will you start your club by sharing some of your hopes for how your club can be the best thing in the world for you as a reader?"

Students talked, and as they did, I jotted key subtopics onto a prominently displayed board:

How can we support each other's reading?

How can we each contribute fully to our club?

What are the predictable problems?

What should we try NOT to do?

After a bit I said, "I know you could continue talking about how to have an effective club, but I also want you to have time to talk about your book, and in particular to work on building two timelines that capture the main events in your protagonist's life, and in the history of the era in which your story is set. Has more happened? Have you learned more backstory? Talk about that.

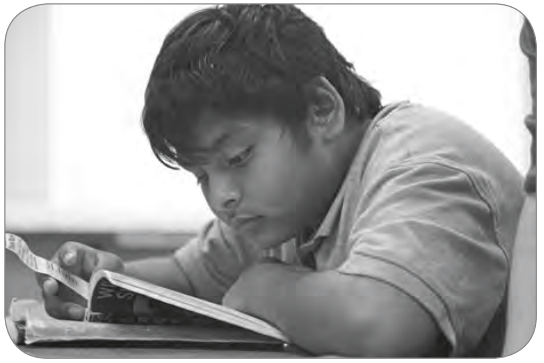
"As you're working today, keep in mind that you have a folder for your club. That folder is where you, I, and any club member can add resources to support your work. For instance, perhaps you come up with some ways to question the text, or insights about your novels, or passages that are worth returning to. It's also going to be your legacy to anyone who wants to duplicate this club later in the year. After all, you don't have to wait for a teacher to set you up with book clubs. You can be in a book club anytime, and your club folder will support future readers."

DOING THE WORK YOUR BOOK IS ASKING YOU TO DO

Readers, tonight before you continue reading your shared novel, will you decide on what the most important work is that you need to be doing? Set up the page of your notebook so that you can do some quick jottings as you read, or after you read, in ways that help you do that work.

If you are thinking about the timeline of your protagonist's life, you might make a timeline. If you are wondering how history intersects with that first timeline, maybe you'll layer in a historical timeline and consider how these timelines intersect.

If the more important work to be doing right now is to be making a family tree of all the characters in your book, or growing theories about a secondary character, or doing anything else . . . do the work that the book is asking you to do. Be prepared to show your work to your club mates tomorrow.



Session 8

Analyzing Descriptive Passages Closely to Learn about Embedded Ideas, Themes, and Issues

GETTING READY

- ✔ Prepare to show two clips from *The New York Times* mini-documentary "San Quentin's Giants." (Show 0:00–1:20; 1:20–3:39.) A link is available in the online resources (see Teaching and Active Engagement).
- ✔ Partners will need to sit together with their books and reader's notebooks in hand (see Teaching and Active Engagement and Link).
- ✔ Prepare to add to the "To Synthesize and Think Critically in Complex Texts . . ." anchor chart (see Link).
- ✔ Copy a section from your read-aloud (we suggest pages 38–39 from *Hidden Figures*) to support a small group with analyzing word choice within descriptive passages (see Conferring and Small-Group Work).

IN THIS SESSION

TODAY you'll teach students that nonfiction authors include description purposefully: often to establish a tone or to develop a theme. Using a short documentary video, you'll invite students to practice noticing when a text slows down to elaborate on a setting and reading carefully for tone and theme.

TODAY YOUR STUDENTS will set goals for their in-class reading, considering where they are in their nonfiction books and what strategies they think will pay off. In today's share, they will talk about their goals with a partner, and decide how to proceed ambitiously, both in terms of volume and analysis.

MINILESSON

CONNECTION

Give students a chance to discuss the homework they did last night, reminding them of yesterday's teaching point. Share out connections you heard and link the work to the day's teaching.

"Last night, you were continuing to notice how key parts in your books go together, even if at first they don't seem to. I see many of you have interesting ways you've been keeping track of that. I see Post-its sticking out, and I've seen a few of your notebooks with graphic organizers that show patterns.

Additional Sample Sessions
Please note that additional sample sessions for each unit are available for review here:
http://hein.pub/6-8-UOS-Samples

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"Take a minute to share your work with your partner. Be sure to name an interesting connection you noticed and show how you've started to track it."

After a minute, I pulled the class back to share out some connections I heard and to link this to today's teaching. "Wow, you're reading such different books, and finding many different kinds of connections. Some of you noticed that parts you didn't think were important at first turned out to connect up later. Others found that really key passages had connections to lots of other parts of their book. Today, you're going to keep thinking about parts that may seem disconnected, but that actually play an important role. Specifically, let's think about descriptive passages in literary nonfiction."

Name the teaching point.

"Today I want to teach you that authors of informational texts stretch out descriptions intentionally. Readers study these parts closely—envisioning them, noticing word choice and images, analyzing details—and thus gain new insight into the ideas, themes, and issues the book explores."

TEACHING AND ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

Share the beginning of a short video to remind students of how setting does more than establish a time and a place—it sets a tone. Channel students to share how the opening scene sets a tone.

"Readers, I know that when you're reading fiction, you're used to noticing the descriptions of setting and paying attention to descriptions that not only reveal a time and a place, but also give a particular feeling. These descriptions set the tone—and help the reader feel what the characters might be feeling.

"Well, nonfiction writers do this too. Let's try a bit of this with the first minute of a documentary about a baseball team. You're going to notice the baseball field. Ask yourself, 'What kind of place does this seem to be?'"

I showed a clip from the film "San Quentin's Giants," up until 1:20, and then asked students to talk to a partner about what they are noticing.

"Do you see how the filmmaker is giving us very particular images of this baseball field? We can see the fences up around it. But we're not seeing fans in a stadium, watching. The players seem very focused on the game, and really it kind of seems like the only thing that's happening. It's not the most beautiful, open field—it's kind of cramped and barren."

Explain that in nonfiction texts, sometimes the setting will be described briefly at first, then shift to become more elaborate. Emphasize that these shifts often help develop a more complex tone.

"Here's the thing. Often in nonfiction, an author will introduce a setting, and you'll start to understand a little about the place and time. Just like in this film, we already see that it's a baseball game, and we get that the players are serious about playing. We could easily feel like we understand enough about this place. But in the next scenes, the director

This video does not explicitly connect to the topic of the central read-aloud Hidden Figures*—and this is on purpose. You'll always want to keep an eye on engagement, and varying the types and topics of your teaching texts is one way to capture readers who may be tiring of a familiar anchor.*

Teachers, it will be important to not give any background information before showing this. Part of the point of today's work is for students to understand how texts unfold to reveal complicated settings, and you'll want students to gradually understand that this field is in a prison—not start out with that knowledge. Be sure to stop before the bird's-eye view of San Quentin and the word penitentiary *appear.*

shows us more. And we have to pay attention if we want to know more about the people who play baseball in this environment, and about the place itself."

Invite students to watch and analyze another few minutes of the video. Ask them to discuss how the additional setting details develop a more complex tone and additional themes and issues.

"Remember that a setting is the physical surroundings *plus* the social and psychological environment. Let's keep watching this mini-documentary, and I'm telling you, we're about to get more details about this setting. And you should feel it change your thinking about this place: about what it feels like to be there. It might also shift your understanding of the men we saw already and their love of baseball.

"Partner 1, can you pay particular attention to the images themselves? Partner 2, can you listen closely to how the men describe their experience of the setting?" I showed the next couple of minutes (until 3:39) of the film "San Quentin's Giants."

"Partners, talk about this. How did *this* setting description shift your thinking about the feeling of this place? About what it's like to live there and play ball there? Be sure you refer to specific images and to the men's reflections in your conversation."

I walked around to capture partners' conversations and to coach in with quick reminders. To one partnership, I said, "Be sure to say *why* the images of the narrow cells made you think that it's an uncomfortable and depressing place to live. It may seem obvious, but saying it will help clarify your thinking." To another, I whispered in, "Ask your partner what in the film gave her the idea that people here don't trust each other."

Explain the purpose of studying descriptive parts closely: to give new insight into the ideas, themes, and issues the book explores. Show a prior scene to allow for this work.

"Readers, you've done a ton of work to study these parts closely. You've envisioned them, noted the author's word and image choices, and analyzed the fascinating details the author included. This careful studying serves a purpose. It can give you new insight into the ideas, themes, and issues a text explores.

"I'm going to show the first minute or so of this film again. It should seem different to you now! Get ready to answer this question: what new insight do you get into the ideas, themes, and issues of this video now that you understand the setting more deeply? Here goes." I played up until 1:20 again.

"Partners, share your thinking. *Now* what are you thinking about the central ideas, themes, and issues of this video? Use what you know from the scenes from *inside* the prison to say more than you did after watching this the first time." I listened in for responses I could share with the whole class.

Share responses that highlight bigger issues, themes, and ideas the text hints at.

"Wow. Compared to what you were saying at the beginning of today's lesson, your thoughts now are much deeper! Some of you said that it seems like one central idea in the text is that baseball gives the prisoners the illusion of freedom. You noticed that the baseball field now seems really spacious and free, compared to what we know the prisoners are used to in their cells. You also said that this hints at the bigger issues of freedom and confinement.

"You can do this in your own books. You can reread a part after you've studied a descriptive passage closely, noting the new insights it gives you into the bigger ideas, themes, and issues in the text."

LINK

Remind students of the steps they'll go through to study a descriptive passage closely, and then encourage them to find a descriptive passage in their own books, in case it's one they want to study.

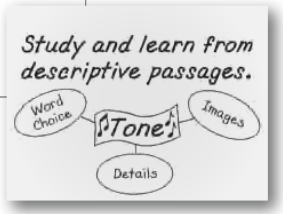
"I would guess that many of your books have descriptive parts that you may have skimmed through quickly. When you find one, study the author's word and image choices closely. Notice unusual details and ask, 'Why did the author include this detail?' Remember that it will often connect, in some way, to the central ideas, themes, and issues in the text. It could be you'd like to start your work today by finding one of these parts and rethinking it."

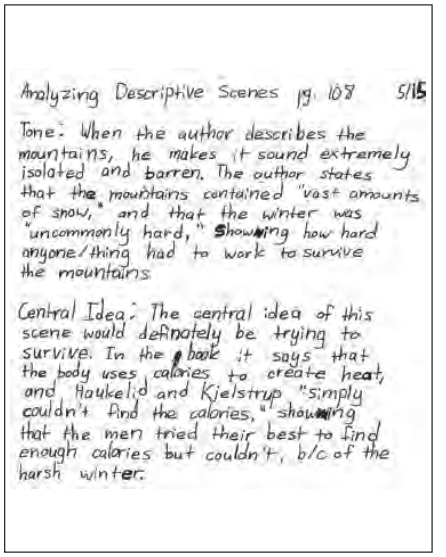
I added the new work to our anchor chart. "Once you've got a plan, head off to get started."

ANCHOR CHART

To Synthesize and Think Critically in Complex Texts . . .

- Expect that even parts that SEEM not to connect actually DO connect; work to build connections.
- **Study and learn from descriptive passages.**
  - **Consider the author's word and image choices. What tone does the author create?**
  - **Notice details and ask, 'Why did the author include this detail? What does it teach me about the central ideas/themes/issues?'**

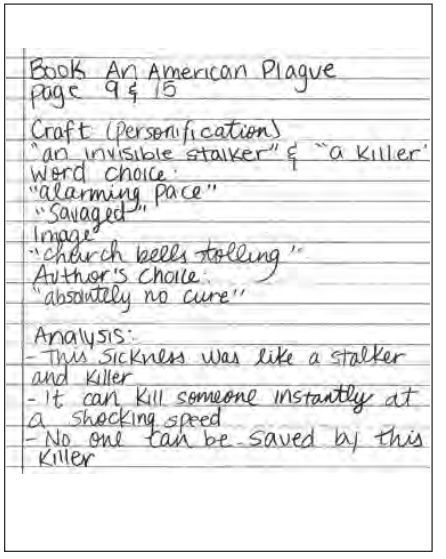




Analyzing Descriptive Scenes pg. 107 5/15

Tone: When the author describes the mountains, he makes it sound extremely isolated and barren. The author states that the mountains contained "vast amounts of snow," and that the winter was "uncommonly hard," showing how hard anyone/thing had to work to survive the mountains.

Central Idea: The central idea of this scene would definately be trying to survive. In the book it says that the body uses calories to create heat, and Haukelid and Kjelstrup "simply couldn't find the calories," showing that the men tried their best to find enough calories but couldn't, b/c of the harsh winter.



Book An American Plague
Page 9 & 15

Craft (personification)
"an invisible stalker" & "a killer"
Word choice:
"alarming pace"
"Savaged"
Image:
"church bells tolling"
Author's Choice:
"absolutely no cure"

Analysis:
- This sickness was like a stalker and killer
- It can kill someone instantly at a shocking speed
- No one can be saved by this killer

FIG. 8–1 Students analyze descriptive passages, especially attending to craft moves, and consider how those passages reveal central ideas.

CONFERRING AND SMALL-GROUP WORK

Helping Students Transfer Work with Tone to Print Texts

WHEN YOU ARE ASKING READERS TO EXPLORE DESCRIPTIVE PARTS, they'll find that these parts contribute to the overall tone and to shifts in tone in the text. Noticing tone as a reader can be tricky in complex texts. But it pays off to think about it, because figuring out if a narrator cares about a place or character—or is dismissive or even angry about a place or a character—helps to interpret deeper themes and issues. You might notice a few students who were able to think about tone with a digital text, when the music, voices, and visuals combined to communicate the physical and psychological setting, but are struggling to note tone when it shows up in writing. To support this, you might coach students through practicing this work first in a familiar, shared text—the read-aloud—before asking them to practice in their own books.

You might start by saying, "To gain new insights from descriptive passages—ones that help you more deeply understand the issues, ideas, and themes in your books—it helps to first reread a passage, working to envision everything the author describes." Then, you could read aloud a small, descriptive chunk from *Hidden Figures*, such as this passage from Chapter 6:

> *Since its establishment in 1917, the Langley Memorial Aeronautical Laboratory's operations had been concentrated on the campus of Langley Field, an Army Air Corps base located on the eastern bank of Hampton's Back River. The Service Building, where Dorothy went through orientation, was one of the oldest buildings on the field. Year after year, the number of buildings had grown, until the laboratory decided to expand to the area on the western side of the river. That land was still a forest when the construction began, and employees joked about having to work in such a remote place. Langley employee newsletter* Air Scoop *described it as a "land of desolation, a land of marshes and mosquitoes."*
>
> *After Dorothy finished the morning's paperwork, she boarded a campus shuttle that drove her to the end of a forested back road connecting the East Side of the Langley campus with the West Side. She looked around at the strange landscape of two-story brick offices and construction sites with half-finished buildings. Towering behind one of the buildings was a gigantic three-story-high ribbed-metal pipe. It was part of a wind tunnel called the Sixteen-Foot High-Speed Tunnel, which was used for experiments on airplanes. To make the scene even more unusual, all of the buildings had been painted dark green to camouflage them against possible attacks from America's wartime enemies.*

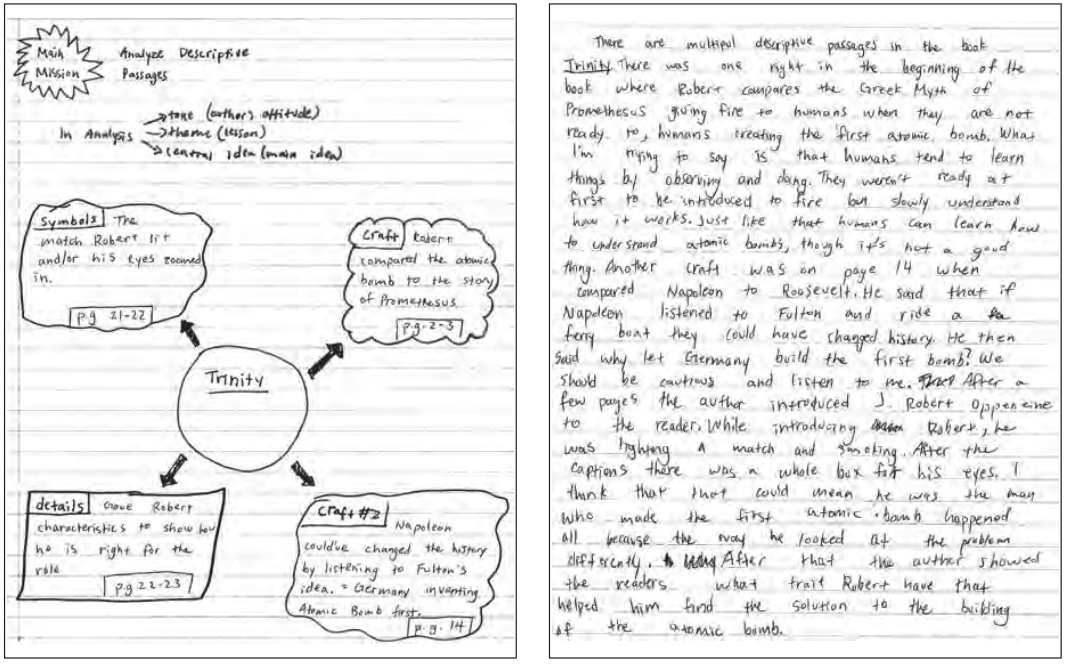
Channel students to share what they envision. After thirty seconds, you might say, "Here's another tip. In these descriptive passages, the author's word choice really matters because it helps communicate the tone. A passage will have a very different tone if it's filled with words like *overjoyed* and *triumphant* and *sunny* than if it's filled with words like *ominous* and *dreary* and *overcast*. Give it a try right now! What words does Margot Lee Shetterly use to describe this place? What ideas does that give you?" You could circle the words students note. Soon, you might have the following words circled: *remote*, *desolation*, *mosquitoes*, *forested back road*, *strange landscape*, *towering*, *unusual*, *enemies*.

Then, you could say, "Just like authors embed parts that somehow connect, the details they include are also there for a reason. When you notice details that feel disconnected or unusual, it pays to study them, asking, 'Why did the author include these details?' Usually the author included them to teach you something about the central ideas, themes, or issues in the book. Try this out right now."

If needed, you might share out a proficient response. You could say, "Words and phrases like *remote*, *desolation*, *unusual*, *strange landscape*, and *forested back road* made this place feel strange, even though the author never came out and called it a strange place. Maybe the author did it to emphasize how radical it was for women to be doing this kind of work at the time. Or, maybe she created this tone to emphasize

how hard and scary it was for women to enter this world of army buildings and possible attacks."

After sharing a brief example with students, launch them into trying this with their books. Be ready to coach students to use the mini-chart on tone and to ask questions such as, "What words did the author use to describe this place? What ideas does that give you?" and "Why did the author include these details?" After a few minutes of coaching students, you could send them off to continue reading independently, with a reminder that they can do this work whenever they encounter descriptive passages.



There are multiple descriptive passages in the book Trinity. There was one right in the beginning of the book where Robert compares the Greek Myth of Prometheus giving fire to humans when they are not ready to, humans creating the first atomic bomb. What I'm trying to say is that humans tend to learn things by observing and doing. They weren't ready at first to be introduced to fire but slowly understand how it works. Just like that humans can learn how to understand atomic bombs, though it's not a good thing. Another craft was on page 14 when compared Napoleon to Roosevelt. He said that if Napoleon listened to Fulton and ride a ferry boat they could have changed history. He then said why let Germany build the first bomb? We should be cautious and listen to me. After a few pages the author introduced J. Robert Oppenheimer to the reader. While introducing Robert, he was lighting a match and smoking. After the captions there was a whole box for his eyes. I think that that could mean he was the man who made the first atomic bomb happened all because the way he looked at the problem differently. After that the author showed the readers what trait Robert have that helped him find the solution to the building of the atomic bomb.

FIG. 8–2 Leslie uses a web to think through descriptive passages in *Trinity*, then writes long for more analysis.

SHARE

Checking In on Your Reading Life and Taking Stock

Encourage partners to reflect on the progress they've made toward the goals they set at the end of Bend I. Channel them to articulate the additional support they'll need to meet their goal.

"Readers, a few days ago, you paused to reflect on how nonfiction reading was going for you, and you set goals for how you could make your reading life even better. Maybe over the past few days, you've had a fiction book going alongside your literary nonfiction book, and that's making all the difference for you. Or maybe you read twenty pages at home last night, when you were only reading fifteen pages a night last week. Or maybe you planned for which nights you can read a lot, and which nights you'll read less.

"Right now, will you and your partner check in around your goals? Be honest. Which goals have you made progress toward? Which goals are you having trouble meeting? And be sure to check in on your volume of reading. By now, you should definitely be finishing up your first book and getting ready to start your second. Talk with your partner about what's going well *and* areas where you could use a little support."

I gave students a few minutes to talk, and then said, "Before you wrap up, will you make a revised plan for how you'll meet your goals? Do you need to take a few minutes of partner time to check in around your goals a few times a week? Do you need to write yourself reminders? Whatever you think will help you meet your goals, make a plan for it now."

SESSION 8 HOMEWORK

READING ON, ALERT TO DESCRIPTIVE PASSAGES

Tonight, there are two things to work on. First, you'll want to read with your own goal in mind. Will you read your nonfiction book for a while, then turn to fiction to get more reading time in? Will you add pages to your reader's notebook because you've not been tracking your thinking? Read more to catch up to your partner?

The second thing is to find a descriptive passage in your book—it could be one you and your partner noted at the end of the lesson. Study it like we studied the film today. Reread the passage you found, and spend a few minutes writing about that part, and how it connects to big ideas or themes in the book. Remember to think about the tone of the passage, and the specific image and word choices the author made.

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Contact **Judith Chin, Coordinator of Strategic Development**
Judith.Chin@readingandwritingproject.com
Phone: (212) 678-3327

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Laurie@readingandwritingproject.com
Phone: (212) 678-8226

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Lucy Calkins is the Founding Director of the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project at Columbia University. For more than thirty years, she has led the Project in its dual functions as a think tank, developing state-of-the-art teaching methods, and a provider of professional development, supporting hundreds of thousands of teachers, principals, superintendents, and policy-makers across the country and around the world.

Lucy is the author or coauthor—and series editor—of the reading, writing, and phonics Units of Study series, which are integral to classroom life in tens of thousands of schools around the world. In addition, she has authored scores of professional books and articles. Lucy is also the Robinson Professor of Children's Literature at Teachers College, Columbia University, where she co-directs the Literacy Specialist Program.

Heather Burns has taught middle school students and coached middle school teachers in Literacy Instruction for the last twenty-one years. She is a Senior Middle School Staff Developer at Teachers College Reading and Writing Project at Columbia University, who supports schools across New York City, Connecticut, and the nation. Heather holds a Reading Specialist/Reading Consultant Sixth Year degree, and an Intermediate Administrative Certificate. She is passionate about curriculum design and implementation, and harnessing deeper thinking and analytical conversations through book clubs.

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As a Lead Staff Developer, researcher, and writer at the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project, **Katie Clements** supports teachers, coaches, and administrators across the nation. She leads advanced sections at the Project's renowned summer institutes, and year-long study groups for lead teachers. Katie has been an adjunct instructor at Teachers College, teaching graduate courses in literacy education. She is author or coauthor of three other books in the Units of Study series, including the Middle School Reading units *Tapping the Power of Nonfiction* and *Literary Nonfiction*. Katie has a deep interest in building student agency, fostering independent thinkers, and helping kids fall in love with nonfiction reading.

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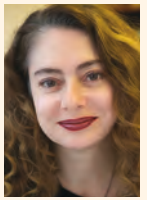

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As a Staff Developer at the TCRWP, **Emily Strang-Campbell** supports schools across New York City, New Jersey, and the nation. Before joining the Project, Emily's classroom at The Clinton School for Writers and Artists was frequently used as a Project lab site for NYC teachers and visiting educators from across the country. Emily earned her Master's Degree from New York University, with a dual certification in Educational Theatre and English in the Secondary Classroom. She also received her MFA in Theatre Arts from Brooklyn College. She is coauthor of the Grade 6 Unit of Study, *Research-Based Information Writing*.

Marc Todd teaches Social Studies at IS 289, the Hudson River Middle School, and is a national presenter for TCRWP. He has led multiple workshops and institutes for TCRWP, the New York City Department of Education, and school districts around the country on teaching students to be critical readers of history. Marc's focus on culturally relevant pedagogy, on immersing kids in nonfiction reading, and on making notebook work serious and joyful inside of content classes has also been featured in a number of books and articles published by TCRWP. Marc opens his classroom at IS 289 to visitors regularly and collaborates with teachers around the globe.

As a Lead Staff Developer at TCRWP, **Katy Wischow** supports elementary and middle schools in New York City and across the nation and the world. She has been an adjunct instructor at Teachers College, teaching graduate courses in literacy education. Katy earned her MA in the Literacy Specialist program at Teachers College and taught for many years in Newark, NJ before joining the Project. She is passionate about curriculum development, using the arts to develop literacy, and creating strong cultures of talk in classrooms, and is coauthor of the Grade 8 Writing Unit of Study, *The Literary Essay* and coauthor of *Unlocking the Power of Classroom Talk*.

Pablo Wolfe trains teachers in workshop model teaching methods as a Staff Developer for the TCRWP. Before joining the Project, he taught at I.S. 392 in Brooklyn, and School of the Future in Manhattan, where he was also Department Head and a mentor for aspiring teachers. Pablo believes strongly in the role of educators as agents of social change and strives to thread that belief through his writing and staff development.

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