

Grade Descriptions

Grade 8

In eighth grade, students build on all they have learned in earlier years and begin to study complex psychological, philosophical, and moral themes in literature. They begin the year with two units on setting, the first on urban settings in America and the second on rural settings in North America. In these units, students consider relationships between setting and theme in literature and write their own stories set in cities and the countryside. From there, the units take various directions. One unit offers an historical perspective on America, while another looks at the relationship between art and artists. In the unit on drama, students read Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream* and compare it with a film version of the play. The sixth unit focuses on the philosophical theme of "the greater good," beginning and ending with Frost's "The Road Not Taken." Through class discussion, close reading, and writing, and through continued study of etymology, students deepen their understanding of all of these works and concepts. They continue to use graphic organizers to plan their writing. In their reports, research essays, and oral presentations, students draw on multiple sources, including literary, informational, and multimedia texts. In class discussions and literary responses, they pay close attention to figurative language and its effects. By the end of eighth grade, students should have a rich background in literature and literary nonfiction, with a grasp of the historical context and many nuances of the works they have read. They are ready for the rigors of high school.

Grade 8 Units

- **UNIT 1** Urban Settings in America: "It Happened in the City"
- **UNIT 2** Rural Settings in North America: "It Happened in the Country"
- **UNIT 3** Looking Back on America
- **UNIT 4** Authors and Artists
- **UNIT 5** Dramatically Speaking
- **UNIT 6** "The Road Not Taken"

Grade 8 Unit 1

Urban Settings in America: “It Happened in the City”

This six-week unit of eighth grade starts off the year with reflections on the settings of stories and events—from poems and short stories to novels and nonfiction material.

Overview:

Students continue to explore characters and plots, but this unit takes a unique approach to examining how setting, directly or indirectly, affects these story elements. Students work on citing textual evidence that uncovers the setting, analyze the impact of the setting on individuals and events, and write their own urban narrative. This unit ends with an open-ended reflective essay response to the essential question.

Essential Question: *What does the urban setting contribute to these stories?*

Focus Standards:

These Focus Standards have been selected for the unit from the Common Core State Standards.

- RI.8.1: Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- RI.8.6: Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how the author acknowledges and responds to conflicting evidence or viewpoints.
- W.8.3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.
- SL.8.1: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on *grade 8 topics, texts, and issues*, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- SL.8.1 (a): Come to discussions prepared, having read or researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence on the topic, text, or issue to probe and reflect on ideas under discussion.
- SL.8.1 (b): Follow rules for collegial discussions and decision-making, track progress toward specific goals and deadlines, and define individual roles as needed.
- L.8.4: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words or phrases based on *grade 8 reading and content*, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.
- L.8.4 (a): Use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence or paragraph; a word’s position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.
- L.8.4 (b): Use common, grade-appropriate Greek or Latin affixes and roots as clues to the meaning of a word (e.g., *precede, recede, secede*).

Student Objectives:

- Read and discuss a variety of fiction and nonfiction, specifically what these genres reveal about life in urban America.
- Write a variety of responses to literature, poetry, and informational text.

- Compare and contrast story characters, plots, themes, and settings from stories about urban America.
- Analyze different accounts of the same event (i.e., September 11, 2001).
- Write poetry (concrete or haiku) and perform it for classmates.
- Compare elements of the musical *Chicago* to other poetry and prose about Chicago.
- Define relationships between words (e.g., urban, urbanization, suburban; city, citify; metropolitan, metropolis).
- Participate in group discussions.

Suggested Works:

(E) indicates a CCSS exemplar text; (EA) indicates a text from a writer with other works identified as exemplars.

Literary Texts

Poems

- "Chicago" (Carl Sandburg) (E)
- "O Captain! My Captain!" (Walt Whitman) (E)
- *Stone Bench in an Empty Park* (Paul Janeczko)
- *Technically, It's Not My Fault* (John Grandits)

Short Stories

(Note: These are used again in unit 2.)

- *American Eyes: New Asian-American Short Stories for Young Adults* (Lori Carlson)
- *America Street: A Multicultural Anthology of Stories* (Anne Mazer)
- *Join In: Multiethnic Short Stories* (Donald R. Gallo)

Stories

- *The Great Fire* (Jim Murphy) (E)
- *KiKi Strike: Inside the Shadow City* (Kirsten Miller)
- *The Catcher in the Rye* (J.D. Salinger)
- *All of the Above* (Shelley Pearsall)
- *A Long Way from Chicago: A Novel in Stories* (Richard Peck) [easy to read]
- *Bag in the Wind* (Ted Kooser and Barry Root) (easier)
- *The King of Dragons* (Carol Fenner) (easier)

Picture Books (Introductory Material)

- *City By Numbers* (Stephen T. Johnson)

Informational Texts

Informational Text

- *The Building of Manhattan* (Donald Mackay) (E)
- *Skyscraper* (Lynn Curlee)
- *The New York Subways* (Great Building Featsseries) (Lesley DuTemple)
- *New York* (This Land is Your Land series) (Ann Heinrichs)

- *September 11, 2001: Attack on New York City: Interviews and Accounts* (Wilborn Hampton)
- *September 11, 2001* (Cornerstones of Freedom, Second Series) (Andrew Santella)
- "The Evolution of the Grocery Bag" (*American Scholar* Magazine, Autumn 2003) (Henry Petroski) (E)
- *America's Top 10 Cities* (Jenny E. Tesar)
- *An American Plague: The True and Terrifying Story of the Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1793* (Jim Murphy) (EA)

Art, Music, and Media

Media

- Video footage from September 11, 2001

Sample Activities and Assessments:

Introductory Activity (for the year)

You will be reading a variety of literature and informational texts this year, and perhaps even some genres you haven't read before. Your teacher will give you a list of twenty genres (such as adventure, historical fiction, comedy, ancient history, science fiction, fantasy, etc.) from which to select titles. One of your goals by the end of the year is to read books from at least four genres that are new to you. (RL.8.10, RI.8.10)

Introductory Activity/Class Discussion

Your teacher will read *Alphabet City* and *City by Numbers*, both by Stephen Johnson, to the class. What is the author's purpose in creating these texts? How can we use this to begin looking at cities (urban settings) in a different way? What are the advantages and disadvantages to using picture books to examine setting? Write responses to these questions in your journal and share with a partner prior to class discussion. (RI.8.1, RI.8.5, RI.8.6, RI.8.7)

Graphic Organizer

As you read one of the novels and/or short stories from this unit, take notes in your journal about the story characters, plot, theme, and setting. As you take notes about these categories, think about how the setting impacts the story. Be sure to note page numbers with relevant information that is explicitly stated or implied, so you can go back and cite the text during class discussion.

- Who are the major character(s)?
- What is the problem faced by the character(s)? How does he/she/they resolve the problem?
- What is the theme of the novel? (i.e., good vs. evil; overcoming challenges, etc.)
- What is the impact of the setting(s) on the characters?
- Is the impact of the setting stated or implied?
- What unique words and phrases are used to describe the setting(s)?

Your teacher may give you the opportunity to share your notes with a partner who read the same text, prior to class discussion. (RL.8.1, RL.8.2, RL.8.4)

Class Discussion

Compare and contrast settings, characters, plots, and themes of the various novels read. Can you begin to make any generalizations about the impact the urban setting has on these stories? What are they? (SL.8.1a, b, RL.8.4)

Informational Text Response

Read various informational texts about New York City, from books about the architecture in Manhattan to books about the events of September 11, 2001. Analyze how different texts make connections and distinctions among individuals, ideas, or events. Write your thoughts in your journal, share ideas with a partner, and revise your ideas if desired. (RI.8.1, RI.8.3, RI.8.7, RI.8.9, SL.8.2, L.8.1a, L.8.2a)

Narrative Writing

While reading the short stories in this unit, explore your own style of writing. Compare and contrast the following among the stories: Which author orients the reader to a story in a manner that is similar to your own? What sensory details do authors use that you like to use too? How does the author incorporate setting as an integral part of the story? What new vocabulary words can you incorporate into your story? How will your story end? Write your own short story of a real or imagined experience that effectively explores the impact of an urban setting on characters and plot. (You may conduct brief research on a city of choice and incorporate facts about that city into your story if you wish.) Publish your story as a podcast or on a class blog and request feedback on your literary style from your classmates. (W.8.3a, b, c, d, e, W.8.7, L.8.1a, L.8.2a)

Write a Poem

Read haiku poems from *Stone Bench in an Empty Park* by Paul Janeczko and concrete poems from *Technically, It's Not My Fault* by John Grandits. Next, compare the portrayal of the grocery bag in *Bag in the Wind* by Ted Kooser to "The Evolution of the Grocery Bag" by Henry Petroski. How does the structure of each text impact the meaning? Write a concrete or haiku poem about a grocery bag and accompanied by a visual/digital illustration. Share your poem with your classmates. (RL.8.5, W.8.4, RL.8.2, RI.8.2, SL.8.6)

Class Discussion

Compare how different poems about the same item (i.e., the grocery bag) are unique in presentation, structure, and style. Which of these elements impacts the meaning of the poem? Why? Write your thoughts in your journal and share with a partner prior to class discussion. (SL.8.1a,b)

Media Appreciation/Class Discussion

Compare and contrast the poem "Chicago" by Carl Sandburg and *The Great Fire* by Jim Murphy. These take place in the same city. How is the urban setting portrayed in each? How does the structure of each lend credence to its meaning? Write your thoughts in your journal and share with a partner prior to class discussion. (RI.8.1, RI.8.9, RL.8.7, RL.8.5)

Class Discussion

It has been said that places have a character of their own. How is setting used as a "character"? Write your thoughts in your journal and share with a partner prior to class discussion. Be sure to cite specific information from texts read. (SL.8.1a, b, RL.8.1, RI.8.1)

Literature Response

What's in a name? Write a journal entry where you respond to this question based on a place read about in class, such as New York City or Chicago. (W.8.9a, b, RL.8.1, RI.8.1)

Word Study

Where do words come from? How does knowing their origin help us not only to spell the words, but also to understand their meaning? This is why we study etymology. Create a personal dictionary of terms found, learned, and used throughout this unit (e.g., urban, urbanization, suburban, city, citify, metropolitan, metropolis, etc.). This dictionary will be used all year long to explore the semantics (meanings) of words and their origins, especially those with Greek and Latin roots. (L.8.4a, b)

Reflective Essay

Write a response to the essential question: "What makes the urban setting unique to these stories?" Make sure to include words and phrases learned in this unit, including figurative and connotative language. After your teacher reviews your first draft, work with a partner to edit and strengthen your writing. Be prepared to record your essay and upload it as a podcast on the class webpage for this unit. (W.8.2a, b, c, d, e, f, W.8.4, W.8.9a, b, SL.8.1a, b, L.8.1a, L.8.2a)

Terminology:

- connotative meaning
- explicit textual evidence
- implicit textual evidence
- literal vs. figurative language
- setting
- theme

Grade 8 Unit 2**Rural Settings in North America: “It Happened in the Country”**

This eight-week unit of eighth grade continues student reflections on settings of stories and events—from poems and short stories to novels and nonfiction material.

Overview:

In this unit, students specifically refer back to unit one, comparing and contrasting rural settings to urban ones. This unit also expands beyond the borders of the United States to Canada and Mexico. Students examine how text structures contribute to meaning, the characteristics of different genres, and begin writing arguments to support the point of view they choose to take. This unit ends with an open-ended reflective essay response to the essential question.

Essential Question: *What does the rural setting contribute to these stories?*

Focus Standards:

These Focus Standards have been selected for the unit from the Common Core State Standards.

- **RL.8.5:** Compare and contrast the structure of two or more texts and analyze how the differing structure of each text contributes to its meaning and style.
- **RI.8.2:** Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to supporting ideas; provide an objective summary of the text.
- **RI.8.7:** Evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of using different mediums (e.g., print or digital text, video, multimedia) to present a particular topic or idea.
- **W.8.1:** Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.
- **SL.8.1:** Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on *grade 8 topics, texts, and issues*, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- **SL.8.1 (c):** Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives.
- **SL.8.1 (d):** Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.

- **L.8.4:** Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words or phrases based on *grade 8 reading and content*, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.
- **L.8.4 (c):** Consult general and specialized reference materials (e.g., dictionaries, glossaries, thesauruses), both print and digital, to find the pronunciation of a word or determine or clarify its precise meaning or its part of speech.
- **L.8.4 (d):** Verify the preliminary determination of the meaning of a word or phrase (e.g., by checking the inferred meaning in context or in a dictionary).

Student Objectives:

- Read and discuss a variety of fiction and nonfiction, specifically what these genres reveal about rural life in North America.
- Compare and contrast information learned about rural life with the previous study of urban life; begin to examine “suburban” life as a combination of rural and urban.
- Compare and contrast story characters, plots, themes and settings from stories about rural North America.
- Write a variety of responses to literature, poetry, and informational text.
- Evaluate the structure of various texts and discuss the impact of the structure on its meaning.
- Write an argument, supported by clear reasons and evidence, about the presentation of rural North America you believe was the most memorable.
- Recognize nuances in meaning among similar words (e.g., rural, agrarian, agriculture, hamlet, village, country, country side, rustic).
- Participate in group discussions.

Suggested Works:

(E) indicates a CCSS exemplar text; (EA) indicates a text from a writer with other works identified as exemplars.

Literary Texts

Stories

Rural United States

- *Travels with Charley: In Search of America* (John Steinbeck) (E)
- *This Land Was Made for You and Me: The Life and Songs of Woody Guthrie* (Elizabeth Partridge) (E)
- *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (Mark Twain) (E)
- *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* (Mildred D. Taylor) (E)
- *The Land* (Mildred D. Taylor)
- *Of Mice and Men* (John Steinbeck)
- *The Last of the Mohicans* (James Fenimore Cooper)
- *Shane* (Jack Schaefer)
- *The Daybreakers* (The Sackett series) (Louis L'Amour)
- *Rural North America*
- *Barrio Boy* (Ernesto Galarza)
- *The Incredible Journey* (Sheila Burnford)

Poems

- "The Railway Train" (Emily Dickinson) (E)
- "Mending Wall" (Robert Frost) (EA)
- *My America: A Poetry Atlas of the United States* (Lee Bennett Hopkins)
- *You Hear Me?: Poems and Writing by Teenage Boys* (Betsy Franco)

Short Stories

- (Note: These were also used in unit 1.)
- *American Eyes: New Asian-American Short Stories for Young Adults* (Lori Carlson)
- *America Street: A Multicultural Anthology of Stories* (Anne Mazer)
- *Join In: Multiethnic Short Stories* (Donald R. Gallo)
- Picture Books (Introductory Material)
- *A Mountain Alphabet* (Margriet Ruurs)
- *B is for Big Sky Country: A Montana Alphabet* (Sneed B. Collard, III and Joanna Yardley)
- *P is for Piñata: A Mexico Alphabet* (Tony Johnston)

Informational Texts

Informational Text

Rural United States

- *The Alamo* (Cornerstones of Freedom, Second Series) (Tom McGowen)
- *African-Americans in the Old West* (Cornerstones of Freedom series) (Tom McGowen)
- *Trail of Tears* (Cornerstones of Freedom series) (R. Conrad Stein)
- *Wild Horses I Have Known* (Hope Ryden)
- *Wildflowers Around the Year* (Hope Ryden)
- *American Science/Technical Subjects*
- €California Invasive Plant Council (Invasive Plant Inventory) (E)
- *Geeks: How Two Lost Boys Rode the Internet out of Idaho* (Jon Katz) (E)
- "The Marginal World" (1955) in *The Edge of the Sea* (Rachel Carson)
- *North America*
- *Never Cry Wolf: The Amazing True Story of Life Among Arctic Wolves* (Farley Mowat)
- *One Hundred & One Beautiful Small Towns in Mexico* (Guillermo Garcia Oropeza and Cristobal Garcia Sanchez)

Additional Resources

- History of Landscape Painting

Art, Music, and Media

Art

- Grant Wood, *American Gothic* (1930)

Sample Activities and Assessments:

Introductory Activity/Class Discussion

Your teacher will read *A Mountain Alphabet* by Margriet Ruurs or *P is for Piñata: A Mexico Alphabet* by Tony Johnston to the class. What is the author's purpose in creating these texts? How are these books presenting rural life as a contrast to the previous study of urban life? What are the advantages and disadvantages to using picture books to examine setting? How is this presentation similar to, or different from, information you find online? Write responses to these questions in your journal and share with a partner prior to class discussion. Consider creating your own ABC book while reading the stories in this unit, and you will find it can be as easy or as complex as you choose to make it. (RI.8.1, RI.8.2, RI.8.6, RI.8.7)

Graphic Organizer

As you read novels and/or short stories from this unit, take notes in your journal about the story characters, plot, theme, and setting. As you take notes about these categories, think about how the setting impacts the story, especially in comparison to the urban settings discussed in the previous unit. Be sure to note page numbers with relevant information, or mark your book with Post-It notes, so you can go back and cite the text during class discussion. Who are the major character(s)?

- What is the problem faced by the character(s)? How do he/she/they resolve the problem?
- What is the theme of the novel? (i.e., good vs. evil, overcoming challenges, etc.)
- What is the impact of the setting(s) on the characters?
- Is the impact of the setting stated or implied?
- What unique words and phrases are used to describe the setting(s)?

Your teacher may give you the opportunity to share your notes with a partner who read the same text, prior to class discussion. (RL.8.5, RL.8.1, RL.8.2, RL.8.4)

Class Discussion

Compare and contrast settings, characters, plots, and themes among the various novels read as well as to those with urban settings from the previous unit. Can you begin to make any generalizations about the impact the rural setting has on these stories? What are they? (SL.8.1a, b, c, d, RL.8.4)

Informational/Literature Text Response Comparison

Read and compare the presentation of Canada in *Never Cry Wolf: The Amazing True Story of Life Among Arctic Wolves* by Farley Mowat to *The Incredible Journey* by Sheila Burnford. Develop a multimedia presentation that explores the similarities and differences visually. (RI.8.1, RI.8.2, RL.8.2, RL.8.5, L.8.1a, b, L.8.2a, b)

Literary Response

Travels with Charley is considered a travelogue. How does the structure contribute to the meaning in a manner different than poetry? Talk about your ideas with a partner. Then, in your journal, describe how Steinbeck uses point of view and other literary devices to convey his thoughts and feelings about America. Cite specific examples/page numbers from the text. (RL.8.1, RL.8.2, RL.8.4, RL.8.5, RL.8.6, L.8.1a, b, L.8.2a, b)

Informational Text Response

What “power of nature” does Carson find in “The Marginal World”? How does the structure contribute to the meaning? Talk about your ideas with a partner. Then, in your journal, include the phrase “the shore has a dual nature” in your explanation, and cite additional support from the text. (RI.8.1, RI.8.2, RI.8.3, RL.8.4, RI.8.5, RI.8.6, L.8.1a, b, L.8.2a, b)

Poetry Response/Class Discussion

Respond to this line from the poem “Mending Wall,” by Robert Frost: “Good fences make good neighbors.” Why does this surface contradiction make sense, not only in the context of the poem, but also in daily life? How does the structure contribute to the meaning? Write responses to these questions in your journal and share with a partner prior to class discussion. (RL.8.1, RL.8.2, RL.8.4, RL.8.5, SL.8.1a, b, c, d, SL.8.3)

Dramatization/Fluency

After reading selections from *My America: A Poetry Atlas of the United States* by Lee Bennett Hopkins, select your favorite poem. How does the structure of poetry contribute to its meaning in a different manner than prose? What does the poem reveal about life in America? Write responses to these questions in your journal and share with a partner prior to reciting your favorite poem for your classmates. (RL.8.5, SL.8.6)

Writing an Argument

What has been the most memorable presentation of rural America you have read? What made it memorable to you? How did having urban settings to contrast with help or hinder the powerful effect of the piece you chose? Write an argument and support your claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence. (If needed, you may conduct brief research on your rural area choice and incorporate those facts into your argument.) Publish your story on a class blog and request feedback on the strength of your argument from your classmates. (W.8.1a, b, c, d, e, W.8.7, W.8.5, W.8.6, L.8.1a, b, L.8.2a, b)

Art Appreciation/Class Discussion

How is rural life in America portrayed in Grant Wood's famous painting, *American Gothic*? Notice the symmetry of the elements in the painting and the frontality of the figures. How does the structure of art impact meaning in a way similar to/different from literature and informational text? Write responses to these questions in your journal and share with a partner prior to class discussion. (RL.8.5, SL.8.1a,b,c,d)

Word Study (1)

[Continuing activity from the first unit] Where do words come from? How does knowing their origin help us not only to spell the words, but also to understand their meaning? Add words found, learned, and used throughout this unit to your personal dictionary (e.g., rural, agrarian, agriculture, hamlet, village, country, countryside, rustic, etc.). This dictionary will be used all year long to explore the semantics (meanings) of words and their origins. (L.8.4a, b, c, d)

Class Discussion/Word Study (2)

Discuss the etymology of the word “suburban.” Based on experience, what elements of urban and rural settings qualify as “suburban”? Discuss similarities and differences found in suburban settings. (SL.8.1a, b, c, d, L.8.4a, b, c, d)

Reflective Essay

Write a response to the essential question: "What makes the rural setting unique to these stories?" Make sure to include words and phrases learned as part of word study, including figurative and connotative language. After your teacher reviews your first draft, work with a partner to edit and strengthen your writing. Be prepared to record your essay and upload it as a podcast on the class webpage for this unit. (W.8.4, W.8.9a, b, SL.8.1a, b, c, d, L.8.1a, b, L.8.2a, b)

Terminology:

- genre
- (review of) setting
- text structures
- (review of) explicit textual evidence
- (review of) implicit textual evidence
- travelogue

Grade 8 Unit 3**Looking Back on America**

This eight-week unit of eighth grade continues with reflections on the setting of stories and events, this time from a historical perspective.

Overview:

Students read works of historical fiction and discuss how authors' perspectives might produce accounts of historical events that differ from what we know happened. Students work collaboratively to reconcile different authors' points of view and discuss why these differences occur. Students read "Paul Revere's Ride" by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and also study the actual events of that night, thus revealing the impact that poetry can have on historical memory. An in-depth research project accompanied by a multimedia presentation is a highlight of this unit because the process integrates skills and meaningful content. Last but certainly not least; this unit ends with an open-ended reflective essay response to the essential question.

Essential Question: *How does learning history through literature differ from learning through informational text?*

Focus Standards:

These Focus Standards have been selected for the unit from the Common Core State Standards.

- **RL.8.9:** Analyze how a modern work of fiction draws on themes, patterns of events, or character types from myths, traditional stories, or religious works such as the Bible, including describing how the material is rendered new.
- **RI.8.3:** Analyze how a text makes connections among and distinctions between individuals, ideas, or events (e.g., through comparisons, analogies, or categories).
- **RI.8.9:** Analyze a case in which two or more texts provide conflicting information on the same topic and identify where the texts disagree on matters of fact or interpretation.
- **W.8.7:** Conduct short research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question), drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions that allow for multiple avenues of exploration.
- **SL.8.5:** Integrate multimedia and visual displays into presentations to clarify information, strengthen claims and evidence, and add interest.
- **L.8.3:** Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.

Student Objectives:

- Read and discuss a variety of fiction and nonfiction about events from America's past.
- Compare and contrast story characters, plots, themes, and settings from stories about American history.

- Analyze how historical fiction draws on themes, patterns of events, or character types from myths or traditional stories.
- Write a variety of responses to literature, poetry, and informational texts, notably the Constitution.
- Determine an author’s point of view in a text, and discuss the impact that has on what was written.
- Recite poetry with classmates.
- Conduct an in-depth research project on a historical event of choice, followed by a multimedia report that includes insights from historical fiction.
- Participate in group discussions.

Suggested Works:

(E) indicates a CCSS exemplar text; (EA) indicates a text from a writer with other works identified as exemplars.

Literary Texts

Poems

- "Paul Revere's Ride" (Henry Wadsworth Longfellow) (E)
- "I, Too, Sing America" (Langston Hughes) (E)
- "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings" (Maya Angelou)
- Hour of Freedom: American History in Poetry (Milton Meltzer)

Stories (Historical Fiction, From Some Non-Traditional Perspectives)

- *George vs. George: The American Revolution As Seen from Both Sides* (Rosalyn Schanzer)
- *1621: A New Look at Thanksgiving* (I Am American) (Catherine O'Neill Grace)
- *Cast Two Shadows: The American Revolution in the South* (Great Episodes) (Ann Rinaldi)
- *33 Things Every Girl Should Know About Women's History: From Suffragettes to Skirt Lengths to the E.R.A.* (Tonya Bolden)
- *Good Women of a Well-Blessed Land: Women's Lives in Colonial America* (Brandon Marie Mailler)
- *Having Our Say: The Delany Sisters' First 100 Years* (Sarah L. Delaney and A. Elizabeth Delany)
- *We Were There, Too!: Young People in U.S. History* (Phillip M. Hoose)
- *The Boys' War: Confederate and Union Soldiers Talk About the Civil War* (Jim Murphy) (EA)
- *Girls: A History of Growing Up Female in America* (Penny Colman)
- *Johnny Tremain* (Esther Forbes) (easier to read)
- *America's Paul Revere* (Esther Forbes and Lynd Ward) (easier to read)
- *Code Talker: A Novel About the Navajo Marines of World War Two* (Joseph Bruchac) (easier to read)
- *The Year of the Hangman* (Gary Blackwood) (easier to read)

Informational Texts

Picture Books (Introductory Material)

- *We the People* (Peter Spier)

Informational Text

- "Letter on Thomas Jefferson" (John Adams) (E)
- Preamble to the United States Constitution (1787) (E)
- First Amendment to the United States Constitution (1791) (E)
- *The Words We Live By: Your Annotated Guide to the Constitution* (Linda R. Monk) (E)
- *Freedom Walkers: The Story of the Montgomery Bus Boycott* (Russell Freedman) (E)
- *The Real Revolution: The Global Story of American Independence* (Marc Aronson)
- *The American Revolutionaries: A History in Their Own Words 1750-1800* (Milton Meltzer)
- *Lincoln: A Photobiography* (Russell Freedman)
- *We Shall Not Be Moved: The Women's Factory Strike of 1909* (Joan Dash)
- *Day of Infamy, 60th Anniversary: The Classic Account of the Bombing of Pearl Harbor* (Walter Lord) (EA)
- *The Making Of America* (Robert D. Johnston)

Biographies

- *George Washington, Spymaster: How the Americans Outspied the British and Won the Revolutionary War* (Thomas B. Allen)
- *Tell All the Children Our Story: Memories and Mementos of Being Young and Black in America* (Tonya Bolden)
- *The Signers: The 56 Stories Behind the Declaration of Independence* (Dennis Brindell Fradin)

Art, Music, and Media

Art

- Grant Wood, *Midnight Ride of Paul Revere* (1931)

Sample Activities and Assessments:

Graphic Organizer

As you read historical fiction from this unit, take notes in your journal about the story characters, plot, themes, patterns of events, and setting. As you take notes about these categories, continue to think about how the historical setting impacts the story. Be sure to note page numbers with relevant information, or mark your text with Post-It notes, so you can go back and cite the text during class discussion.

- Who are the major character(s)?
- Do they remind you of any character types from myths or other traditional stories? How?
- What is the problem faced by the character(s)? How does he/she/they resolve the problem?
- What is the theme of the novel? (i.e., good vs. evil, overcoming challenges, etc.)
- What is the impact of the historical setting(s) on the characters, plot, or theme?
- Are there any recognizable patterns of events? What are they and what do they remind you of?

Your teacher may give you the opportunity to share your notes with a partner who read the same text, prior to class discussion. (RL.8.5, RL.8.1, RL.8.2, RL.8.9)

Class Discussion

Compare and contrast the impact of historical settings on characters, plots, and themes of the various novels read. Can you begin to make any generalizations about the impact historical setting has on these stories? What are they? (SL.8.1a, b, c, d, RL.8.9)

Class Discussion/Informational Text Response

Read the Preamble and First Amendment to the United States Constitution and compare this to how they are presented in *We the People* by Peter Spier. Discuss how the illustrations help you to understand the text. Then read *Words We Live By: Your Annotated Guide to the Constitution* by Linda R. Monk and discuss how the annotations help you further. Write responses to these questions in your journal and share with a partner prior to class discussion. Then do the following:

- Summarize what you learned by outlining the main ideas behind the Preamble to the Constitution and the First Amendment by creating a comic strip of key ideas. Be sure to note the page/paragraph numbers that each box refers to so you can go back and cite the text during class discussion. (RI.8.1, RI.8.2, RI.8.7, RI.8.9, L.8.3, SL.8.5)
- Make a list of new vocabulary words that you learned from this book and encounter in other (fictional) texts read. (RI.8.4)

Literary/Informational Text Response

Girls: A History of Growing Up Female in America by Penny Colman presents the female perspective throughout history as revealed in diaries, memoirs, letters, photographs, and popular magazines. Compare this to John Adams' "Letter on Thomas Jefferson." What do these texts reveal about the historical time period they were written in/about? Talk about your ideas with a partner. Then, in your journal, describe how an author's point of view influences readers' thoughts and feelings about America. Cite specific examples/page numbers from the text. (RL.8.1, RI.8.1, RL.8.2, RI.8.2, RL.8.3, RI.8.3, RI.8.6, RI.8.9, W.8.9b, L.8.1a, b, c, L.8.2a, b, c, L.8.3)

Literary Response

Compare the two sides of the American Revolution as presented in *George vs. George: The American Revolution As Seen from Both Sides* by Rosalyn Schanzer. Or, compare the "traditional" story you were told of Thanksgiving to the one presented in *1621: A New Look at Thanksgiving (I Am American)* by Catherine O'Neill Grace. In your journal, describe how an author's point of view influences their thoughts and feelings about America. What specific lines or incidents helped you to re-examine your pre-conceived notions about these events? Cite specific examples/page numbers from the text. (RL.8.1, RL.8.2, RL.8.3, RL.8.6, W.8.9a, L.8.1a, b, c, L.8.2a, b, c, L.8.3)

Poetry Response/Class Discussion

Respond to this line from the poem "Paul Revere's Ride" by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow: "The fate of a nation was riding that night." What is the literal versus figurative meaning of this line? Discuss how literature can give a different view of history than informational texts. Why are we so drawn to poetry? Write responses to these questions in your journal and share with a partner prior to class discussion. (RL.8.1, RL.8.2, RL.8.4, RL.8.5, SL.8.1a, b, c, d, SL.8.3, L.8.3)

Dramatization/Fluency

After reading "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings" by Maya Angelou, discuss the meaning of this poem as it relates to life in America. How does the structure of poetry contribute to its meaning in a different manner than prose? What does the poem reveal about life in America? Does the caged bird remind you of any character types from other stories read? Decide how to share lines/stanzas with a classmate, and perform a dramatic reading of this poem for your classmates. (RL.8.5, RL.8.9, SL.8.6, L.8.3)

Report Writing

Choose an event from America's past to research, focusing on the connections among individuals, ideas, and events. Draw on several sources, including a variety of literary, informational, and multimedia texts in order to find multiple perspectives on an event. Write a report and work with classmates to strengthen the quality of your report. Prior to publishing, integrate multimedia and/or visual displays into your report to clarify information and strengthen your claims with evidence. Present your report to the class and upload it to a class webpage for this unit. (RL.8.6, RI.8.3, RI.8.6, RI.8.7, RI.8.8, W.8.2a, b, c, d, e, f, W.8.7, W.8.5, W.8.6, L.8.3, SL.8.4, SL.8.5, L.8.1a, b, c, L.8.2a, b, c, L.8.3)

Art Appreciation/Class Discussion

How does art help us to look back on America in a different way than informational or literary texts do? How does the visual depiction of an event, such as the painting *Midnight Ride of Paul Revere* by Grant Wood, tell a deeper story than text alone? Write responses to these questions in your journal and share with a partner prior to class discussion. (RL.8.5, SL.8.1a, b, c, d, L.8.3)

Word Study

[Continuing activity from the second unit] Add the words we've found, learned, and used throughout this unit to your personal dictionary (e.g., from "Paul Revere's Ride": moorings, muster, barrack, grenadiers, belfry, encampment, etc.) This dictionary will be used all year long to explore the semantics (meanings) of words and their origins. (L.8.4a, b, c, d)

Reflective Essay

Write a response to the essential question: "How is learning history through literature different than learning through informational texts?" Make sure to include words and phrases learned as part of word study, including figurative and connotative language, and refer to literature and informational texts read. After your teacher reviews your first draft, work with a partner to edit and strengthen your writing. Be prepared to record your essay and upload it as a podcast, or other multimedia format, on the class webpage for this unit. (W.8.4, W.8.9a, b, SL.8.1a, b, c, d, SL.8.4, L.8.3, L.8.1a, b, c, L.8.2a, b, c, L.8.3)

Terminology:

- character types
- historical fiction
- patterns of events
- point of view
- pre-conceived notion

Grade 8 Unit 4**Authors and Artists**

This fourth four-week unit of eighth grade goes beyond the initial focus on America, and examines the similarities between literary authors and artists.

Overview:

In this unit, students step back and consider the motivations of authors and artists alike: What inspires artists? How is it similar and different from that which inspires authors? How is the process of creating a painting or sculpture similar to and different from the process of writing a story or poem? Students also read books written about artists, and study art that can be seen in museums across America. Students work with classmates to uncover the unspoken meanings behind words and artwork. In addition to fine art, students discuss illustrations and other forms of commercial art, looking for similarities to and differences from fine art, both in motivation and presentation styles. They write an informative/explanatory piece about an artist of interest. This unit ends with an open-ended reflective essay response to the essential question.

Essential Question: *How are artists and authors similar?*

Focus Standards:

These Focus Standards have been selected for the unit from the Common Core State Standards.

- **RL.8.2:** Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text.
- **RI.8.5:** Analyze in detail the structure of a specific paragraph in a text, including the role of particular sentences in developing and refining a key concept.
- **RI.8.8:** Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is sound and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; recognize when irrelevant evidence is introduced.
- **W.8.2:** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.
- **SL.8.2:** Analyze the purpose of information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and evaluate the motives (e.g., social, commercial, political) behind its presentation.
- **L.8.5:** Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.
- **L.8.5 (b):** Use the relationship between particular words to better understand each of the words.
- **L.8.5 (c):** Distinguish among the connotations (associations) of words with similar denotations (definitions) (e.g., *bullheaded*, *willful*, *firm*, *persistent*, *resolute*).

Student Objectives:

- Read and discuss a variety of fiction and nonfiction, specifically what these genres reveal about art and artists.
- Determine an author’s point of view in a text, compare it with an artist’s perspective in a work of art, and discuss the impact perspective has on what was created.
- Compare and contrast authors’ and artists’ motivations for creativity.
- Conduct research on an artist of choice.
- Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used to describe authors and artists, including figurative, connotative, and technical vocabulary.
- Discuss how the use of literary techniques, such as humor or point of view, helps engage readers with the text.
- Write a variety of responses to literature, poetry, informational text, and works of art.
- Participate in group discussions

Suggested Works:

(E) indicates a CCSS exemplar text; (EA) indicates a text from a writer with other works identified as exemplars.

Literary Texts

Stories

- *From the Mixed Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler* (E.L. Konigsburg)
- *Leaving Eldorado* (Joann Mazzio)
- *Talking With Tebe: Clementine Hunter, Memory Artist* (Mary E. Lyons) (easier)
- *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (James Joyce) (advanced)

Poems

- *Is This Forever, or What?: Poems & Paintings from Texas* (Naomi Shihab Nye)

Picture Books (Introductory Material)

- *Museum ABC* (NY Metropolitan Museum of Art)
- *Museum Shapes* (NY Metropolitan Museum of Art)

Informational Texts

Biographies

Artists

- *Artist to Artist: 23 Major Illustrators Talk to Children About Their Art* (Eric Carle, Mitsumasa Anno, and Quentin Blake)
- *Vincent Van Gogh: Portrait of an Artist* (Jan Greenberg and Sandra Jordan) (E)
- *Book of Black Heroes: Great Women in the Struggle* (Tayomi Igus)
- *Norman Rockwell: Storyteller with a Brush* (Beverly Gherman)
- *Sparky: The Life and Art of Charles Schulz* (Beverly Gherman)
- *Andy Warhol, Prince of Pop* (Jan Greenberg and Sandra Jordan)

- *A Caldecott Celebration: Seven Artists and their Paths to the Caldecott Medal* (Leonard S. Marcus)
- *Marc Chagall* (Artists in Their Time series) (Jude Welton)
- *Mary Cassatt: Portrait of an American Impressionist* (Tom Streissguth)
- *Vincent Van Gogh: Sunflowers and Swirly Stars* (Smart About Art series) (Brad Buck and Joan Holub) [easier to read]
- *Henri Matisse: Drawing with Scissors* (Smart About Art series) (Jane O'Connor and Jessie Hartland) [easier to read]
- *Pablo Picasso: Breaking All the Rules* (Smart About Art series) (True Kelley) [easier to read]
- *The Lives of the Artists* (Giorgio Vasari), excerpt on Michelangelo or Leonardo [advanced readers]

Authors

- *Maya Angelou* (Just the Facts Biographies) (L. Patricia Kite)
- *Invincible Louisa: The Story of the Author of Little Women* (Cornelia Meigs)
- *Margaret Wise Brown: Awakened by the Moon* (Leonard S. Marcus)
- *Mark Twain* (Just the Facts Biographies) (Susan Bivin Aller)
- *Bram Stoker: The Man Who Wrote Dracula* (Great Life Stories) (Steven Otfinoski)
- *Aung San Suu Kyi: Fearless Voice of Burma* (Whitney Stewart)

Informational Text

Art

- *A Short Walk Around the Pyramids & Through the World of Art* (Philip M. Isaacson) (E)
- *Smithsonian Q&A: American Art and Artists: The Ultimate Question & Answer Book* (Tricia Wright)
- *Pictorial History*
- *Buffalo Hunt* (Russell Freedman) (EA)
- *The Buffalo and the Indians: A Shared Destiny* (Dorothy Hinshaw Patent)

Art, Music, and Media

Art

- Prompt: How do painters use perspective to engage viewers in their work?
- Édouard Manet, *Dead Toreador* (1864)
- Andrea Mantegna, *Lamentation over the Dead Christ* (1480)
- Michaelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, *Supper at Emmaus* (1601)
- Paul Cézanne, *The Card Players* (1890-92)
- Paolo Uccello, *Niccolo Mauruzi da Tolentino at the Battle of San Romano* (1438-40)
- Hieronymus Bosch, *The Garden of Earthly Delights* (1503-04)
- Chuck Close, *Fanny/Fingerpainting* (1985)
- Sylvia Plimack Mangold, *The Linden Tree* (1988)

Sample Activities and Assessments:

Introductory Activity/Class Discussion

Read *Museum ABC* or *Museum Shapes* by the Metropolitan Museum of Art with the class. What is the author's purpose in creating these texts? How do these books provide a different way of looking at art and artists? How is this presentation similar to or different from information you find online? Consider creating your own ABC book of art and artists as a class. (RI.8.1, RI.8.6, RI.8.7)

Class Discussion

Look at how artists' use of perspective impacts the works of art (from the list above). Discuss the different perspectives with your classmates (e.g., bird's eye, worm's eye) and how changing the perspective would entirely change the piece. Find other examples of art using these perspectives. As you proceed through this unit, use a similar approach to examine how authors use point of view. Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how (and if) the author acknowledges conflicting viewpoints. How does the point of view affect your understanding of the story, and how would changing the point of view entirely change the story? (SL.8.1a, b, c, d, RI.8.6)

Graphic Organizer

As you read biographies of authors and artists, take notes in your journal about the character's motivation for creativity. As you take notes about these categories, think about the similarities and differences between authors and artists. Be sure to note page numbers with relevant information so you can go back and cite the text during class discussion.

- Who is the focus of the biography?
- When did the author or artist first know that he/she was a creative person?
- How did the time in which the author or artist lived, or his/her physical location (i.e., urban or rural), impact his/her work?
- What unique words and phrases are used to describe the artist?

Your teacher may give you the opportunity to share your notes with a partner who read the same text, prior to class discussion. (RI.8.1, RI.8.2, RI.8.3, RL.8.3, RL.8.1, RL.8.2, RL.8.4, RI.8.8)

Class Discussion

Compare and contrast the lives of authors and artists based on the information from the graphic organizer. Can you begin to make any generalizations about how authors and artists are similar? What are they? (SL.8.1a, b, c, d, RL.8.4)

Informational Text Response/Report Writing

Look at the websites listed above, and read through *A Short Walk Around the Pyramids & Through the World of Art* by Philip M. Isaacson in order to select an artist whose work you enjoy. Choose at least two different biographies about this artist to read. As you read the biographies, determine the figurative, connotative, and technical meanings of words and phrases as they are used to describe the artist and his/her work. Supplement this reading with additional research about the artist, his/her artistic style, preferred subjects, and where his/her art is exhibited. Work with classmates to strengthen your writing through planning, revising, and editing your report. Publish your report on a class blog for this unit. (RI.8.1, RI.8.2, RI.8.3, RI.8.4, RI.8.5, RI.8.8, W.8.7, W.8.5, W.8.6, W.8.2a, b, c, d, e, f)

Informational/Literature Text Response Comparison

Read and compare the use of humor in *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler* by E.L. Konigsburg to the use of humor in *Vincent Van Gogh: Sunflowers and Swirly Stars* by Joan Holub. How does the use of humor engage the reader? How do artists use humor in their art to engage the observer? Write responses to these questions in your journal and share with a partner prior to class discussion. (RI.8.1, RI.8.2, RI.8.3, RI.8.5, RL.8.2, RL.8.6)

Literary Response

From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler takes place in an art museum. How does the setting contribute to this story? Why? How are the characters' motivations (Claudia, Jamie, Mrs.

Frankweiler) similar and different? Write responses to these questions in your journal, citing specific examples/page numbers from the text. (RL.8.1, RL.8.2, RL.8.6)

Literary Response

How do Maude's circumstances in *Leaving Eldorado* by Joann Mazzio hinder her dreams of becoming an artist? How do these circumstances motivate her? Does this story remind you of others read? Why? Write responses to these questions in your journal, citing specific examples/page numbers from the text. (RL.8.1, RL.8.6, RL.8.9)

Literary Response

How does James Joyce's stream-of-consciousness style in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* help you understand the character's motivations? Write responses to these questions in your journal, citing specific examples/page numbers from the text. (RL.8.1, RL.8.6, RL.8.9)

Class Discussion

Look at a variety of art: fine art, illustrations, ads, pictorial histories, etc. Evaluate the motives (e.g., social, commercial, political) behind each presentation. How does the motivation impact the message? Why? Write responses to these questions in your journal and share with a partner prior to class discussion. (SL.8.2, SL.8.1a, b, c, d)

Dramatization/Fluency

After reading selections from *Is This Forever, or What?: Poems & Paintings from Texas* by Naomi Shihab Nye, select your favorite poem. How does the structure of the poem selected contribute to its meaning and style? How does the point of view of the author create effects such as suspense or humor? Share your insights with a partner and then perform your favorite poem for your classmates. (RL.8.5, SL.8.6)

Word Study

[Continuing activity from the third unit] Add words found, learned, and used throughout this unit to your personal dictionary (e.g., from *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler*: inconspicuous, impostor, and stowaway; elements of art/principles of design: color, line, proportion, line, shape, space, unity, balance, form, texture, rhythm). This unit focuses on distinguishing among the connotations of these words as they are used by artists. This dictionary will be used all year long to explore the semantics (meanings) of words and their origins. (L.8.4a, b, c, d, L.8.5b, c)

Class Discussion/Art Appreciation (1)

Just as the elements and principles of design are the building blocks for artists, discuss the elements or building blocks for quality writing. Write responses to these questions in your journal and share with a partner prior to class discussion. (SL.8.1a, b, c, d)

Class Discussion/Art Appreciation (2)

Examine and discuss the variety of perspectives used by the artists in the artworks listed above (e.g., worm's eye perspective, sitting at the table, far away, up close, etc.). How does the perspective affect the viewer's relationship to the work? Write responses to these questions in your journal and share with a partner prior to class discussion. Discuss how this compares to authors' use of perspective in the characters they create. (SL.8.1a, b, c, d)

Reflective Essay

Based on everything read, written, and discussed in this unit, write a response to the essential question: "How are artists and authors similar?" Make sure to include words and phrases learned as

part of word study, including connotative language. After your teacher reviews your first draft, work with a partner to edit and strengthen your writing. Be prepared to record your essay and upload it as a podcast, or other multimedia format, on the class webpage for this unit. (W.8.4, W.8.9a, b, SL.8.1a, b, c, L.8.1a, b, c, L.8.2a, b, c, L.8.3, L.8.5b, c)

Terminology:

- author's style
- humor
- irony
- mood
- perspective (worm's eye, bird's eye)
- point of view
- tone

Grade 8 Unit 5**Dramatically Speaking**

This four-week unit of eighth grade continues an examination of the arts, but focuses on the art of dramatic performance of plays, speeches, and poems.

Overview:

In this unit, students read plays such as *Sorry, Wrong Number* and compare it to a Shakespeare play and film with similar themes. They read and listen to famous speeches by Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Barbara Jordan. They read and perform poetry by Nikki Giovanni, Pablo Neruda, and T.S. Eliot. While reading these different genres, students analyze lines of dialogue, scenes, or words that are critical to the development of the story or message. They analyze how the use of flashback can create a sense of suspense in the reader/listener. They pay special attention to word choice, and how word meaning is revealed not only in context, but also through tone and inflection. Finally, this unit ends with an open-ended reflective response to the essential question. Students must choose which genre they prefer and defend that answer, thus continuing to strengthen their skill at writing arguments.

Essential Question:

How is reading a script for a play or speech or poem different than actually performing dramatically?

Focus Standards:

These Focus Standards have been selected for the unit from the Common Core State Standards.

- **RL.8.3:** Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision.
- **RL.8.6:** Analyze how differences in the points of view of the characters and the audience or reader (e.g., created through the use of dramatic irony) create such effects as suspense or humor.
- **RL.8.7:** Analyze the extent to which a filmed or live production of a story or drama stays faithful to or departs from the text or script, evaluating the choices made by the director or actors.
- **W.8.1:** Critique and write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.
- **SL.8.3:** Delineate a speaker's argument and specific claims, evaluating the soundness of the reasoning and relevance and sufficiency of the evidence and identifying when irrelevant evidence is introduced.
- **L.8.5:** Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.
- **L.8.5 (a):** Interpret figures of speech (e.g., verbal irony, puns) in context.
- **L.8.5 (b):** Use the relationship between particular words to better understand each of the words.

Student Objectives:

- Read and discuss a variety of dramatic fiction and nonfiction about plays, playwrights, public speakers, and poets.
- Analyze how particular lines of dialogue in *Sorry, Wrong Number* propel the action and reveal aspects of a character.
- Compare and contrast characters, plots, themes, settings, and literary techniques used in plays and films.
- Analyze the extent to which a filmed or radio production of *Sorry, Wrong Number* stays faithful to or departs from the text or script, evaluating the choices made by the director or actors.
- Write a variety of responses to literature and informational texts, including speeches.
- Conduct research on a playwright or public speaker of choice.
- Discuss how creating a sound argument is essential to engaging listeners in a speech.
- Perform for classmates in a variety of styles (e.g., drama, poetry, speeches, etc.).
- Participate in group discussions, and critically evaluate classmates' arguments.

Suggested Works:

(E) indicates a CCSS exemplar text; (EA) indicates a text from a writer with other works identified as exemplars.

Literary Texts

Plays

- *Sorry, Wrong Number* (Lucille Fletcher) (E)
- *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (William Shakespeare; adapted by Diana Stewart and illustrated by Charles Shaw)
- *Zora Neale Hurston: Collected Plays* (Zora Neale Hurston)
- *The Colored Museum* (George C. Wolfe)
- *Famous Americans: 22 Short Plays for the Classroom, Grades 4-8* (Liza Schafter, ed.)

Speeches

- "The Banking Crisis" (First Fireside Chat, Franklin Delano Roosevelt) (March 12, 1933)
- Keynote Address to the Democratic National Convention (Barbara Jordan) (July 12, 1976)

Poems

- "A Poem for My Librarian, Mrs. Long" in *Acolytes: Poems* by Nikki Giovanni (Nikki Giovanni) (E)
- "The Book of Questions" (Pablo Neruda) (E)
- "Macavity" (T.S. Eliot)

Music Lyrics

- "Macavity," from *Cats* (Andrew Lloyd Webber)

Stories

- *King of Shadows* (Susan Cooper) (EA)

Informational Texts

Biographies

Playwrights

- *Sorrow's Kitchen: The Life and Folklore of Zora Neale Hurston* (Great Achievers series) (Mary E. Lyons)
- *The Play's the Thing: A Story About William Shakespeare* (Creative Minds Biographies) (Ruth Turk)
- *Hitchcock on Hitchcock: Selected Writings and Interviews*(Alfred Hitchcock)

Public Figures

- *Franklin Delano Roosevelt* (Russell Freedman)
- *Barbara Jordan: Voice of Democracy (Book Report Biography)* (Lisa Renee Rhodes)

Poets

- *Memoirs* (Pablo Neruda)
- "T. S. Eliot" (Wikipedia)

Videographies

- *Spirit to Spirit: Nikki Giovanni* (1988)
- *Art, Music, and Media*
- *Media*
- *Sorry, Wrong Number* (1948)

Art, Music, and Media

Media

- *Dial M for Murder* (1954)
- *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1999)
- *Cats* (PBS Great Performances) (1998)

Sample Activities and Assessments:

Graphic Organizer

As you read the plays (and view the films) in this unit, take notes in your journal about particular lines of dialogue or incidents that propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision. Be sure to note page numbers with relevant information so you can go back and cite the text during class discussion.

- What is the setting of the play?
- Who are the major and minor characters?
- What is the theme of the play?
- What problems are faced by the character(s)? How does he/she overcome this challenge?
- Which lines of dialogue or events were pivotal to the play? Why?
- Describe the use of literary techniques, such as flashback, in the play. How do these reveal the point of view of the character and create suspense?

Your teacher may give you the opportunity to share your notes with a partner who read the same text, prior to class discussion. (RL.8.3, RL.8.6, RL.8.7, RL.8.1, RL.8.2)

Class Discussion

Compare and contrast the plots, settings, themes, characters, and literary techniques used. Can you begin to make any generalizations about how films and plays have a different impact than literature? What are they? Evaluate the claims made by your classmates and evaluate the soundness of reasoning they use in discussion. (SL.8.1a, b, c, d, RL.8.6, SL.8.3)

Literary Response

Why have Shakespeare's plays, such as *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, stood the test of time? Why do we study these plays today? Talk through your ideas with a partner. Then, write an argument in support of studying Shakespeare in eighth grade, including citations from selections read and connections to references in modern-day websites, plays, and movies. (W.8.1a, b, c, d, e, W.8.4, SL.8.1a, b, c, d, RL.8.6, RL.8.9)

Dramatization/Class Discussion

Read the script of *Sorry, Wrong Number* with your classmates. Discuss how the use of flashbacks adds suspense to the tone of the play. Then listen to the radio drama version and/or view the film version and compare these to the written version. Analyze the extent to which a filmed or live production of a story or drama stays faithful to or departs from the text or script, evaluating the choices made by the director or actors. Write responses to these questions in your journal and share with a partner prior to class discussion. (RL.8.3, RL.8.5, RL.8.6, RL.8.7, SL.8.6)

Informational Text Response/Report Writing

How are playwrights or public speakers similar to and different from authors? Choose a playwright or public speaker to research. As you read about his/her life, determine the author's point of view or purpose in writing the text, and analyze how it impacts your understanding of the person's life. Work with classmates to strengthen your writing through planning, revising, and editing your report. Publish your report on a class wiki about playwrights or public speakers. (RI.8.1, RI.8.2, RI.8.3, RI.8.6, W.8.7, W.8.5, W.8.6, W.8.2a, b, c, d, e, f, L.8.1a, b, c, d, L.8.2a, b, c, L.8.3, L.8.5a, b, c)

Literary Response

How are the speeches by Barbara Jordan and Franklin Delano Roosevelt similar? Different? What perspectives do they bring to their speeches? How do these speakers inspire listeners? What is important for us to learn from these speeches, and why is it important to continue reading them from generation to generation? Share ideas with a partner and then write your own response in your journal. (RL.8.2, RL.8.4, RL.8.5, RL.8.6, SL.8.1a, b, c, d)

Graphic Organizer

Create a T-chart or Venn diagram in your journal where you compare two speeches, such as the "Fireside Chat" by Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Barbara Jordan's keynote address at the 1976 Democratic National Convention. Delineate each speaker's arguments and specific claims, evaluate the soundness of the reasoning, and make a judgment about the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence. Point out any particular words that you understand better because of how they were used in context. Write a response to this question in your journal: "What is the difference between reading the speech and hearing it/seeing it performed live?" (SL.8.3, L.8.5a, b, c, RL.8.5, SL.8.1a, b, c, d)

Class Discussion

How is the delivery of spoken message similar and different between plays and speeches? When would you choose to give a speech? When would you choose to embed a speech (monologue) in a

drama? What are the similarities and differences between performing in a play and delivering a speech? Write responses to these questions in your journal, citing specific examples/page numbers from the texts read and speeches heard. (RL.8.1, RL.8.5, SL.8.1a, b, c, d)

Dramatization/Fluency

Choose your favorite selection from *Acolytes: Poems* by Nikki Giovanni or from *The Book of Questions* by Pablo Neruda. Talk with a classmate about the meaning of the poem chosen. Practice reading it, changing the words emphasized and inflection used. Perform it dramatically for your class, choosing two different interpretations. Be sure you can articulate how the different interpretations change the tone and mood of the poem. (RL.8.2, RL.8.3, SL.8.6)

Poetry Response

Compare and contrast the T. S. Eliot poem "Macavity" to the character of the same name in the Andrew Lloyd Webber musical *Cats*. How are they similar and different? Write a response in your journal, citing specific examples from the poem and musical to justify your thinking. (RL.8.1, RL.8.6, RL.8.9)

Word Study

[Continue this activity from the fourth unit] Add words found, learned, and used throughout this unit to your personal (i.e., dialogue, monologue, staging, etc.). This unit will especially focus on vocabulary unique to plays. This dictionary will be used all year long to explore the semantics (meanings) of words and their origins. (L.8.4a, b, c, d, L.8.5a, b, c)

Class Discussion/Media Appreciation

How is the plot and use of suspense similar and different between *Sorry, Wrong Number* and *Dial M for Murder*? Write responses to these questions in your journal and share with a partner prior to class discussion. (RL.8.6, SL.8.1a, b, c, d)

Reflective (Argument) Essay

Based on your experiences reading and performing in this unit, write a response to the essential question: "How is reading a script for a play or speech or poem different than actually performing dramatically?" Which do you prefer and why? Cite specific examples from poems, speeches, or plays read. After your teacher reviews your first draft, work with a partner to edit and strengthen your writing. Be prepared to record your essay and upload it as a podcast, or other multimedia format, on the class webpage in order to facilitate sharing with your classmates. (W.8.1a, b, c, d, e, W.8.4, W.8.9a, b, SL.8.1a, b, c, d, L.8.1a, b, c, d, L.8.2a, b, c, L.8.3, L.8.5a, b, c)

Terminology:

- dialogue
- drama
- film noir
- flashback
- monologue
- screenplay
- script
- staging

Grade 8 Unit 6**“The Road Not Taken”**

This final six-week unit of eighth grade encourages students to explore their strengths by reading about strong characters who ventured against conventional society in search of the greater good.

Overview:

The stage is set by Robert Frost’s poem “The Road Not Taken.” Although students read from classic and contemporary literature, writing and class discussions focus on how literature helps us define the tension between the needs of the individual and the greater good of society. The goal of this unit is for students not only to apply the reading, writing, speaking, and listening strategies and skills they have learned up until this point in the year, but also to analyze how authors use allegory, symbolism, and satire to make an impact on the reader. This unit ends with a review of “The Road Not Taken” in order to see how this unit led to deeper understanding of the poem. As with all other units, this unit ends with an open-ended reflective response to the essential question. This essay is followed with a choice for students: write their own narrative or create their own multimedia presentation

Essential Question: *How can literature help us define the greater good?*

Focus Standards:

These Focus Standards have been selected for the unit from the Common Core State Standards.

- RL.8.7: Analyze the extent to which a filmed or live production of a story or drama stays faithful to or departs from the text or script, evaluating the choices made by the director or actors.
- W.8.3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.
- SL.8.4: Present claims and findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with relevant evidence, sound valid reasoning, and well-chosen details; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.
- L.8.3: Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.
- L.8.3 (a): Use verbs in the active and passive voice and in the conditional and subjunctive mood to achieve particular effects (e.g., emphasizing the actor or the action; expressing uncertainty or describing a state contrary to fact).

Student Objectives:

- Read and discuss a variety of novels that reveal, explicitly or implicitly, “the greater good.”
- Experiment with performing poetry in variety of styles and discuss how these changes affect its interpretation.
- Compare and contrast characters, plots, themes, settings, and literary techniques used in the stories read.

- Analyze how particular lines of dialogue in literature propel the action and reveal aspects of a character.
- Analyze how writing styles and literary techniques, such as symbolism or satire, are used and how their use impacts meaning and reader engagement.
- Write a variety of responses to literature and informational text.
- Analyze the extent to which a filmed version of a story stays faithful to or departs from the text, evaluating the choices made by the director or actors.
- Create a multimedia presentation on “the greater good” where the message is either explicitly stated or implied.
- Participate in group discussions.

Suggested Works:

(E) indicates a CCSS exemplar text; (EA) indicates a text from a writer with other works identified as exemplars.

Literary Texts

Poems

- "The Road Not Taken" (Robert Frost) (E)
- *Things I Have To Tell You: Poems and Writing by Teenage Girls* (Betsy Franco)
- *Night Is Gone, Day Is Still Coming: Stories and Poems by American Indian Teens and Young Adults* (Annette Piña Ochoa, Betsy Franco, and Traci L. Gourdine)

Stories

- *Little Women* (Louisa May Alcott) (E)
- *I, Juan De Pareja* (Elizabeth Borton de Trevino)
- *Lord of the Flies* (William Golding)
- *The Old Man and the Sea* (Ernest Hemingway)
- *Gulliver's Travels* (Jonathan Swift)
- *The Sea-Wolf* (Oxford World's Classics Edition) (Jack London)
- *Rebecca* (Daphne du Maurier)
- *American Dragons: Twenty-Five Asian American Voices* (Laurence Yep) (EA)
- *The Color of My Words* (Lynn Joseph) (easier)
- *Children of the River* (Linda Crew) (easier)
- *Amos Fortune, Free Man* (Elizabeth Yates) (easier)
- *The Outsiders* (S.E. Hinton) (easier)

Informational Texts

Science/Technical Subjects

- “Trek 7, The Fractal Pond Race” (from *Math Trek: Adventures in the Math Zone*) (Ivars Peterson and Nancy Henderson) (E)

Art, Music, and Media

Media

- *Little Women* (1949)
- *Little Women* (1994)
- *Lord of the Flies* (1990)
- *The Old Man and the Sea* (1958)
- *The Old Man and the Sea* (1990)

- *Gulliver's Travels* (1996)
- *The Sea Wolf* (1941)

Art

- Diego Velazquez, *Juan de Pareja* (1650)

Sample Activities and Assessments:

Introductory Activity

Read "The Road Not Taken" by Robert Frost. Talk with a classmate about what you think the poem means, both literally and figuratively. Write your ideas down in your journal. We will revisit this poem at the end of the unit to see if our thoughts and ideas have changed. (RL.8.2, RL.8.4, SL.8.5)

Graphic Organizer

As you read the novels (and view the films) in this unit, take notes in your journal about particular lines of dialogue or incidents that propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or "the greater good." Be sure to note page numbers with relevant information so you can go back and cite the text during class discussion.

- What is the setting of the novel?
- Who are the major and minor characters?
- What problems are faced by the character(s)? How does he/she overcome this challenge?
- Which lines of dialogue or events were pivotal to the novel? Why?
- What elements were changed between the novel and the film version?
- What traditional, mythical, or Biblical references are made in the novel?
- What elements of "the greater good" are revealed, implicitly or explicitly, in the novel?

Your teacher may give you the opportunity to share your notes with a partner who read the same text, prior to class discussion. (RL.8.3, RL.8.7, RL.8.9, RL.8.1, RL.8.2, RL.8.10)

Class Discussion

Compare and contrast settings, themes, and characters, and how these story elements help us to define "the greater good." Evaluate the claims made by your classmates and evaluate the soundness of reasoning they use in discussion. Can you begin to make any generalizations about what is "the greater good"? (SL.8.1a, b, c, d, RL.8.9, SL.8.3)

Informational Text Response

After reading "Trek 7, The Fractal Pond Race" from *Math Trek: Adventures in the Math Zone* by Ivars Peterson and Nancy Henderson, respond to the following question in your journal: "How did Benoit Mandelbrot follow 'The Road Not Taken' in his approach to fractals? What can we learn from him?" (RI.8.1, RI.8.6, RI.8.8, W.8.4, RI.8.10, W.8.9b, L.8.1a, b, c, d, L.8.2a, b, c, L.8.3, L.8.5a, b, c)

Literary Response/Class Discussion

After reading *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott:

- Discuss the role of the setting in *Little Women*. Why does Alcott put such an important historical event into background of her story?
- Why does Alcott alternate between stories about each of the four March sisters throughout *Little Women*? Why is this literary technique effective?

Write responses to these questions in your journal and share with a partner prior to class discussion. (SL.8.1a, b, c, d, RL.8.2, RL.8.4, RL.8.6, RL.8.10)

Speech Writing/Presentation

Compare the societal discriminations the Logan family experienced in *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* by Mildred Taylor (read in unit 2) to the gender discrimination in *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott. How are the characters' experiences similar yet different? Write a speech where you argue which form of discrimination is more detrimental, cite specific passages from the texts, and present your speech to the class. (RL.8.1, RL.8.2, RL.8.3, RL.8.10, W.8.1a, b, c, d, e, W.8.4, L.8.5a, b, c, L.8.1a, b, c, d, L.8.2a, b, c, L.8.3, L.8.5a, b, c)

Literary Response/Art Connection

How does the writing style (from the first-person point of view), in *I, Juan De Pareja* by Elizabeth Borton de Trevino impact your connection to the protagonist, Juan? How is Juan's struggle to paint (because Spanish slaves at the time were forbidden to practice the arts) simultaneously fascinating, suspenseful, and inspiring? View Diego Velazquez's portrait of Juan de Pareja. How does looking at this painting expand your knowledge of its subject? Write responses to these questions and others that are self-generated in your journal. (RL.8.2, RL.8.3, RL.8.6, RL.8.10, W.8.9a)

Literary Response

Compare the allegorical nature of *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding to Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* in your journal. What important symbols are used in each novel? How is the use of symbolism integral to these novels? Write an informative essay comparing and contrasting the similarities and differences in these novels, citing specific page numbers for explicit and implicit text references. Share your essay with a partner, and discuss as a class. (W.8.2a, b, c, d, e, f, W.8.4, SL.8.1a, b, c, d, RL.8.4, RL.8.5, RL.8.9)

Literary Response

Respond to the following questions in your journal:

- How is satire expressed through Jonathan Swift's use of language and style in *Gulliver's Travels*?
- How does Swift's writing style change as the story evolves?
- How do the characters' physical characteristics reflect their inner feelings?
- How does *Gulliver's Travels* explore the idea of utopia?
- How is the idea of utopia related to "the greater good"? (RL.8.4, RL.8.6, RL.8.9, W.8.4, W.8.9a, L.8.5a, b, c)

Literary Response

Compare the characters of Hump and Larsen from *The Sea-Wolf* by Jack London. How do their perspectives on life differ? Are there any similarities between the two characters? Write your responses to these questions in your journal. (RL.8.1, RL.8.3, RL.8.6, RL.8.10)

Literary Response

In your journal, respond to the following prompts about *Rebecca* by Daphne du Maurier: What impact does the nameless heroine have on the novel? What does this namelessness symbolize?

What is the role of Manderley in the novel? How does setting contribute to the plot? To the tone? To the suspenseful nature?

What would be "the greater good" learned from *Rebecca*? (RL.8.2, RL.8.4, RL.8.6)

Dramatization/Class Discussion

Read one of the novels from this unit. Then view select scenes from the film version, and compare these to the written version. Analyze the extent to which a filmed or live production of a story or drama stays faithful to or departs from the text, evaluating the choices made by the director or actors. Write responses to these questions in your journal and share with a partner prior to class discussion. (RL.8.5, RL.8.7, SL.8.6)

Class Discussion

Re-read the first poem read in this unit, "The Road Not Taken." After this unit of study, describe how your understanding of this poem has changed. What new insights have you gained? After class discussion, practice reading the poem aloud, emphasizing different words. How does changing emphasis change the meaning? Highlight the words and phrases you plan to emphasize and recite it for your class. How is your interpretation similar to, and different from others? How can taking a risk (such as performing a poem in a unique manner) be a positive step? (RL.8.2, RL.8.4, SL.8.6)

Reflective Essay/Narrative Writing/Multimedia Presentation

Based on your experiences reading novels and viewing related films in this unit, as well as literature read all year, write a response to the essential question: "How can literature help us define the greater good?" After your teacher reviews your first draft, you may choose to write your own narrative that reveals your definition of "the greater good" or develop a multimedia presentation where this definition is implied. In your narrative or presentation, include references to specific examples of what you learned from novels read and films viewed about characters, the impact of settings, and pivotal lines of dialogue. Incorporate a variety of words learned this year. Publish your essay, story, or multimedia presentation as your culminating project for eighth grade. (W.8.3a, b, c, d, e, W.8.5, W.8.6, W.8.8, W.8.9a, b, W.8.10, SL.8.4, SL.8.5, L.8.5a, b, c, L.8.6, L.8.1a, b, c, d, L.8.2a, b, c, L.8.3)

Terminology:

- allegory
- explicit
- hero/heroine
- implicit
- satire
- strength of character
- symbolism
- writing style