

**Grade 7: Unit 4 Topic 1 - Historical Fiction**  
**Essential Question: What truths can be revealed through studying the past?**  
**Suggested Pacing: 35-40 days**



**Background:** In fifth grade students studied historical fiction as they learned about the American Revolution and the events that led up to the conflict. They also read historical fiction in book clubs that focused on the American Revolution.

**Task:** Students will write an argumentative essay about their historical fiction novel and answer the question: Is conflict necessary for change or growth?

**Purpose:** The purpose of this task is to use literature to support an opinion about whether or not conflict is a necessary lever for change. Students can use the main characters in their novels as evidence of how conflict in the story precipitated or did not precipitate any change by the end of the novel.

**Getting Started:**

The teacher will begin by asking students to write a short story about one memory they have from the COVID-19 pandemic. The teacher will write about a memory they have from this time period alongside the students as a model. After students have finished writing, they will share their stories with their groups. These are small moment stories and are not expected to be any prescribed length.

They will make a list of similarities that their stories share and why they all chose to write about those events or topics. When authors write historical fiction, they seek to understand the event and share that understanding with others. What do you now understand about the COVID-19 pandemic from listening to your peers? As authors of a historical piece, what would you want to read more about if you were to turn this into a longer, fiction piece?

**Making Meaning:**

The teacher will then display the following question to students on an anchor chart: Why do authors write about the past?

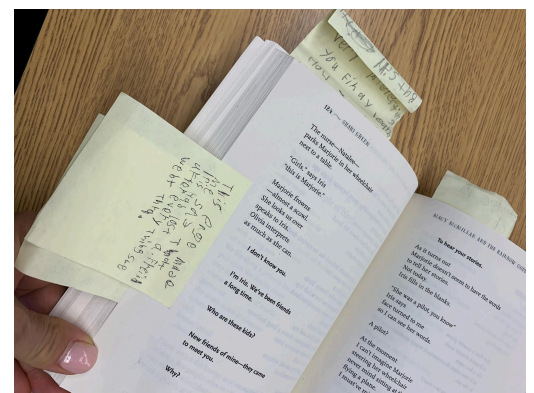
Allow time for students to think independently, then discuss their thoughts with the group. Have students write their responses on a sticky note and add it to the anchor chart to answer the question. The teacher can refer back and add to this anchor chart throughout the unit as students make new observations.

**Investigation:**

Students will select a novel of their choice and work in book clubs. Teachers will use excerpts from *Towers Falling* by Jewell Parker Rhodes as a mentor text. Mini lessons will focus on the following topics:

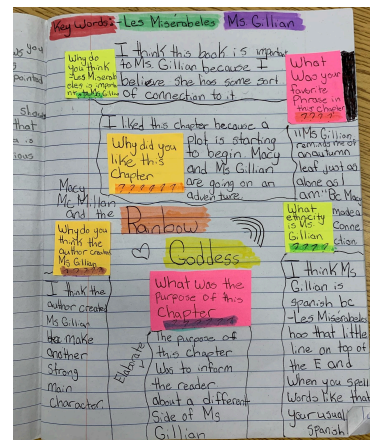
- Analyzing how characters respond to trouble
- The collision of internal traits with external conflict
- Reading outside the text to build up background knowledge
- Analyzing power in the midst of conflict
- The past is always with us

As they read, students will take notes and collect evidence in their notebooks on each of the mini-lesson topics. These notes will help them draft their argument essays in the next stage of the task.



During book club reading, the teacher should engage with three main tasks:

1. Joining book clubs briefly for the purpose of listening to conversation, asking questions, and assessing the needs of students as readers.
2. Conduct reading conferences with students for the purpose of understanding where they are as readers and delivering instruction in reading strategies to strengthen their skills.
3. Conducting reading journal conferences with students to review their journals, the evidence they pull out, and their thoughts and ideas about the reading for the purpose of assessing their ability to critically think and analyze while reading.



Please refer to [this guide](#) so that conferences and meetings with students are conducted in a uniform way across classrooms and schools for an assured experience for students and teachers.

For book clubs, the selections above should be introduced by the teacher. Students are able to choose their own book for the following activity. Based on students' selections, the teacher will form groups. Students will keep needed information in their **reader's notebooks** based on their book club selection. Students should also use sticky notes to annotate their text, placing sticky notes in their journal based on the level of importance and how they want to discuss those notes. For notes that they want to discuss at length, they should move into the reading journal so that students can discuss them in writing. **See the picture above** for an example.

During book clubs: **(RCCM.1) (RCCM.3) (COM.1) (COM.2)**

Students will have time to read with peers, the teacher, and with streaming audio, as available.

- Teachers will meet with one or two book clubs per day (depending on what reading conferences may be planned) for discussion and written response in reader's notebooks. Students should be asked to perform a variety of tasks in their reader's notebooks. Some examples include the following, but not limited to:
  - Quote analysis (e.g., what did a character say or what did the author write that paused you to think or make connections?) **(RCCM.1)**
  - Word analysis (e.g., pick a word that was particularly effective in creating an image for you) **(COM.1) (COM.2) (RCCM.3)**
  - Character analysis (e.g., a choice the character made, a behavior from the character, a feeling or need expressed by the character) **(RCCM.1) (RCCM.2)**
  - Point of view: Who is telling the story? Is it a narrator we can't see? (3rd person) Is it one of the characters? (1st person) How does this point of view affect how we understand a story? **(RCCM.2)**
  - Symbols, similes, metaphors: What has the author included in the story that helps us to infer character motives, make predictions, identify theme, etc. **(LL.2)**

### **Create and Produce:**

After finishing their novels and collecting notes on the historical event from their story, students will write an argument essay answering the question: Is conflict necessary for change or growth?

The teacher will guide students through the process of planning, drafting, revising and editing their writing, providing small group instruction and scaffolds as necessary. The final essay should include a claim, logical reasons supporting their claim, and relevant evidence from their historical fiction novel.

**Communicate and Present:**

Students will present their essays in small groups. As students listen to their classmates share their work, they will compile a list of points that they agree with and think differently about. After each student in the group has shared, they will use their notes to launch a discussion about the writing prompt.

**Reflection:**

In their journals, students will reflect on the following question: What truths can be revealed through studying the past?

[Link to curriculum formatted task](#)