AmplifyELA

Welcome!

6A: Dahl & Narrative

In this unit, students begin with narrative writing to quickly boost their interest and confidence and to learn the foundational skill of focus. Students then apply their new observational focus to some lively readings from Roald Dahl's memoir Boy, and learn how to work closely with textual evidence.

Core texts your student will read:

- *Boy: Tales of Childhood* by Roald Dahl

What my students will do/learn:

- Students complete narrative writing exercises in which they "slow down the moment," using observational details to focus on and develop small moments from their own experiences.
- Students learn key classroom routines, including the sharing routine, during which classmates respond to shared writing by noting one effective way the writer used language or details or evidence.
- Students read and discuss Roald Dahl's recollection of his experiences as a schoolboy in England. As they read his memoir *Boy*, they analyze how he uses detail to convey the range of emotions—from excitement to fear—that he felt.
- Students write consistently throughout the unit, developing their idea or claim about the text and providing textual evidence.
- Students write an end of unit essay responding to the following prompt: Whom does Dahl describe as causing more trouble: the boys or the adults? Use details from one moment in the book to show who is really causing more trouble.

Here are some conversation starters that you can use during this unit to promote discussion and encourage continued learning with your student.

1. What are two of the moments from your experiences that you wrote about as you learned to focus on one moment? What caught your attention about those moments? What details stood out?
2. What moment in Dahl's childhood was most surprising to you? Was there anything about his stories that reminded you of yourself or someone you know?
3. Can you share a piece of writing with me in which you used precise details to show, not tell? (Provide feedback to your student by finding something in their writing that you can respond to as a reader. For example, "I really like how you described your hanging head at the buzzer and how you dragged your feet to the locker room. I can see your disappointment at the loss.")
4. In *Boy*, how does Dahl seem to feel about the adults in his life? How would you describe the relationship between the boys and the adults in Dahl's childhood?

AmplifyELA

Welcome!

6B: Mysteries & Investigations

In this unit, students read like an investigator as they study the world of scientific and investigative sleuthing. *The Secret of the Yellow Death: A True Story of Medical Sleuthing* by Suzanne Jurmain and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories take place in the late 19th century, when medical diagnostics and criminal investigations were still evolving into scientific fields.

As students read *The Secret of the Yellow Death,* the lessons challenge students to grapple with clues, evidence, and scientific data to work alongside Dr. Walter Reed and his team of scientific investigators to collaborate with their Cuban counterparts and seek the truth about yellow fever. Dr. Reed became famous for the work his team did to uncover the method by which the deadly yellow fever is transmitted. Students explore the team's approaches to experiments and working with human subjects, and consider how current scientists and health workers approach issues of public health. Students then continue to trace evidence as they move on to closely read two Sherlock Holmes detective stories, breaking down Holmes's observations of a crime scene to understand how the detective breaks unsolvable mysteries wide open. At the end of the unit, students write an essay explaining which character trait is most useful to problem-solving investigators.

NOTE: Yellow fever is a severe illness. While there is a very effective vaccination for this disease, there were large and devastating epidemics of yellow fever in American history. Especially given the Covid-19 pandemic, some students may find the descriptions of yellow fever and the past outbreaks of the illness upsetting. Provide opportunities for students to express their feelings and talk about current events. It may be helpful to point out that the work of medical and scientific communities is focused on finding solutions, including preventative measures and medical interventions.

Core texts your student will read:

- *The Secret of the Yellow Death: A True Story of Medical Sleuthing* by Suzanne Jurmain
- Excerpt from *Fever 1793* by Laurie Halse Anderson
- Letter from Mabel H. Lazear to Dr. James Carroll
- "Yellow Fever Circles Brazil's Huge Cities" by Shasta Darlington and Donald G. McNeil Jr.
- The Hippocratic Oath
- "The Speckled Band" by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle
- "The Red-Headed League" by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

What my student will do/learn:

- Students read and discuss the methods and discoveries of a team of scientists as they investigate the theories about yellow fever and its transmission in *The Secret of the Yellow Death*.
- Students use a specially-designed Evidence app to understand and practice how to analyze and evaluate evidence presented in the texts they read.

- Students investigate alongside Sherlock Holmes as he unlocks mysteries in “The Speckled Band” and “The Red-Headed League.” Using the detective apps Scene of the Crime and Caught Red-Handed, students identify and evaluate clues, while piecing together the truth.
- Students continue to use key classroom routines, including the sharing routine, during which classmates respond to shared writing by noting one effective way the writer used details or evidence.
- Students continue to write in response to prompts 2–3 times weekly, and practice analytic writing in response to text by developing a controlling idea or claim and providing support with details or evidence.
- Students write an end-of-unit essay responding to the following prompt: Based on the texts you have read, what stands out to you as one important characteristic to have as a problem solver or investigator? Include two examples of individuals demonstrating this characteristic in your response.

Here are some conversation starters that you can use during this unit to promote discussion and encourage continued learning with your student.

1. What was surprising about the process that doctors and scientists took to determine the cause of yellow fever? Can you think of people today using similar processes to solve problems?
2. In *The Secret of the Yellow Death*, scientists try to figure out what causes yellow fever in an effort to stop its spread. In the Holmes stories, Sherlock Holmes tries to figure out who committed a crime (and in some cases, what exactly that crime is). When you’re trying to figure something out, what steps do you usually take? Do any of your steps match those taken by investigators in this unit?
3. What stands out to you about Sherlock Holmes? Consider his personality, his relationship with Watson, and his investigative techniques.
4. Can you share a piece of writing with me in which you support an idea with evidence or details from the text? (Provide feedback to your student by finding something in their writing that you can respond to as a reader. For example, “When you use the detail about Dr. Carroll’s five children and explain how that means he ‘must be able to provide for them,’ it supports your idea that he would not have wanted to get sick with yellow fever.”)
5. What characteristic(s) do you notice that the scientists investigating yellow fever have in common with Sherlock Holmes?

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Welcome!

6C: The Chocolate Collection

In this unit, students explore the world of chocolate, using primary documents and conducting independent research to understand the diverse range of roles that chocolate has played in cultures around the world. Students have access to primary and secondary articles, artifacts, and images that cover the 3,700 year history of chocolate and take students on an odyssey that includes ancient times in Mexico, as well as the Olmec, Mayan, and Aztec peoples and their cultures, through to current day issues in chocolate production, including the movement for better labor practices and reduced habitat destruction. Students build information literacy skills, learn how to craft and then answer a research question, and collaborate to conduct a Socratic seminar. They learn how to construct an evidence-based argument and use those skills to write a short piece aimed at convincing readers that *their* favorite kind of chocolate is the best, debate whether or not chocolate should be included in school lunches, and draft a persuasive letter to a local candy store owner.

Throughout these activities, students learn to build their knowledge by identifying and researching source documents, and to construct explanations and arguments based on solid, relevant evidence and information. As students reach the end of the unit, they synthesize all of the skills they've developed to tackle a culminating research project—part essay, part interactive timeline.

Core texts your student will read:

- Excerpt: "Prehistoric Americans Traded Chocolate for Turquoise?" from National Geographic News by Christine Dell'Amore
- Letter from Lord Rothschild to Laurence Fish
- "Pilot Dropped Candy into Hearts of Berlin" by ABC News
- Excerpt: Appendix C Statement from *Labour in Portuguese West Africa* by William A. Cadbury
- "Is It Fair to Eat Chocolate?" from *Skipping Stones* by Deborah Dunn
- "Eat More Chocolate, Win More Nobels?" from *Associated Press* by Karl Ritter and Marilynn Marchione
- "Can Chocolate Be Good for My Health?" by Katherine Zeratsky,
- Excerpt: "Dark Chocolate: A Bittersweet Pill to Take" from *USA Today* by Mary Brophy Marcus
- "Chocolate" from *American Smooth* by Rita Dove
- Excerpt: Act I, Scene Eight from *Così fan tutte: English National Opera Guide*
- Excerpt: *Chocolat* by Joanne Harris
- Excerpt: *The Dharma Bums* by Jack Kerouac
- Excerpt: "The Sweet Lure of Chocolate" by Jim Spadaccini
- Excerpt: "The Tropics" from *The Story of Chocolate* by National Confectioners Association's Chocolate Council
- Excerpt: "Good Harvest" from *All Animals* magazine by Karen E. Lange

What my students will do/learn:

- Students conduct fun and "low-stakes" scavenger hunts to become familiar with the range of texts and images included in this unit. Students learn how to construct research questions and identify appropriate and relevant websites and Internet sources for answers.
- Students write an argumentative letter, persuading a local candy store owner to consider the ways in which their chocolate is produced.
- Students work in groups to research the health pros and cons of chocolate, prepare arguments, and debate whether chocolate should be included in school lunches.
- Students continue to use key classroom routines, including the sharing routine, during which classmates respond to shared writing by noting one effective way the writer used details or evidence.
- Students continue to write in response to prompts 2–3 times weekly, and practice analytic writing in response to text by developing an idea or claim and providing support with details or evidence.
- Students write an end-of-unit essay responding to one of the following prompts:
    a. Research Option 1: Chocolate and Slavery: When did slavery become a part of chocolate production? Is slavery still used on cacao plantations today? Write an informative essay about the history of slavery in the production of chocolate.
    b. Research Option 2: Chocolate = Happiness…or Does It? Can eating chocolate affect your mood? Your brain chemistry? Is it addictive? Study the scientific research on chocolate and determine what experts have found. Research the texts in the Collection and on the Internet to find the information you need.
- Students also develop an interactive timeline to share their essay research with the class.

Here are some conversation starters that you can use during this unit to promote discussion and encourage continued learning with your student.

1. As you worked to evaluate sources, what did you notice about the credible websites? What advice might you give a friend looking for information on the Internet?
2. What is plagiarism? What steps can you take to avoid it?
3. What are some new facts that you've learned about chocolate from the readings in this Collection? Does anything you read change the way you buy or eat chocolate? Can you share with me an argumentative piece of writing or part of your debate argument? (Provide feedback to your student by finding something in their writing that you can respond to as a reader. For example, "I like how you explain how many children in the Ivory Coast have to pick cocoa beans for 12 hours a day rather than go to school. That is great evidence to make someone think about where their chocolate comes from.")

AmplifyELA

Welcome!

6D: The Greeks

In this unit, students study three well-known stories centered on key “heroes” from Greek mythology: Prometheus, Odysseus, and Arachne. Drawing on the routines and skills established in previous units, students analyze the characters, actions, and themes of the individual myths, but also discuss some of the broader questions and themes raised by these myths, these heroes, and the view of the world presented.

The first myth, “Prometheus,” raises a number of engaging questions about justice, responsibility, and what it means to be human. Students then dive into one of the famous episodes from Homer’s epic poem *The Odyssey,* which recounts the various adventures of the witty and tricky Odysseus as he makes his journey home from the Trojan War. Odysseus’s actions challenge students to consider how character traits can be both beneficial and harmful, and what constitutes leadership. Then students read “Arachne," a poem by Ted Hughes, which retells Ovid’s famous origin myth. In this sub-unit, students explore the confrontation between the human Arachne and the goddess Minerva. They consider the line between pride and arrogance, but also what it means to speak truth to power. At the end of the unit, students use their understanding of these myths to write an essay arguing whether these myths suggest that humans are destroyed by their pride.

Note: The gods depicted in Greek myths can be violent, selfish, and capricious in their dealings with humans. Students may find some of the depictions of the gods’ actions—and their consequences for humans—upsetting. Provide opportunities for students to express their feelings. It may be helpful to remind students that these myths were one way people tried to understand certain aspects of human life—both the good parts and the cruel parts.

Core texts your student will read:

- "Prometheus" from *Heroes, Gods and Monsters of the Greek Myths* by Bernard Evslin
- Excerpts from *The Odyssey* by Homer, translated by E.V. Rieu
- "Arachne" from *Selected Tales from Ovid* by Ted Hughes

What my student will do/learn:

- Students complete the *Myth World* Quest, a game-like experience that immerses them in the complex world of the Olympian gods and familiarizes them with the primary characters of Greek mythology.
- In “Prometheus,” students perform parts of the narrative to develop a deeper understanding of both Zeus’s and Prometheus’s central arguments about whether humans should have fire.
- In the excerpt from *The Odyssey*, students read and discuss how Odysseus recounts his encounter with the Cyclops to consider what they learn about Odysseus’s character as he interacts with Polyphemus and ultimately escapes his cave.

- Students analyze the central argument between the outspoken human Arachne and the goddess Minerva in Ted Hughes's retelling of Ovid's "Arachne" myth. They then develop their argument about whether the talented and outspoken Arachne was treated fairly by the goddess.
- Students use their understanding of myth and its structure to write their own versions of the Prometheus and Arachne myths.
- Students continue to use key classroom routines, including the sharing routine, during which classmates respond to shared writing by noting one effective way the writer used details or evidence.
- Students continue to write in response to prompts 2–3 times weekly, and practice analytic writing in response to text by developing a controlling idea or claim and providing support with details or evidence.
- Students write an end-of-unit essay responding to the following prompt: Using two of the following characters—the humans from "Prometheus," Odysseus from *The Odyssey*, or Arachne from "Arachne"—answer the following question: Are humans destroyed by their pride? Why or why not? Use your answer to stake a claim about whether or not these characters have been destroyed by their pride. Be sure to support your claim with textual evidence.

Here are some conversation starters that you can use during this unit to promote discussion and encourage continued learning with your student:

1. Do you think that Zeus's punishment of Prometheus was fair? Considering both Prometheus's and Zeus's arguments regarding how fire would affect humans, do you think Prometheus should have stolen fire and given it to humans?
2. Greek myths often pushed readers to consider real human issues. What ideas about human character do you think were raised for Greek listeners when they considered the stories of Odysseus and Arachne? Do you believe that people still think about these ideas today?
3. Can you share a piece of writing with me in which you provide evidence from the text to support your controlling idea or claim? (Provide feedback to your student by finding something in their writing that you can respond to as a reader. For example, "You help me see that humans do deserve fire when you point out how Prometheus compares men without fire to beasts.")
4. Each of the myths in this unit touch upon the idea of pride. How did pride affect each of the human characters? In what way was it a destructive force? In what way was it a strength?

AmplifyELA

Welcome!

6E: Summer of the Mariposas

In this unit, students read *Summer of the Mariposas* by Guadalupe Garcia McCall, a novel that follows the journey of the Garza sisters into Mexico and back. The story takes the sisters on a journey to find themselves, each other, and their family. Using the hero's journey structure and Homer's *Odyssey* as inspiration, McCall creates a world in which Mexican folklore and Aztec legends are woven into the more realistic experiences of Odilia and her sisters.

Over the course of the unit, students consider how characters change and develop, compare McCall's retelling to episodes from Homer's *Odyssey*, contrast the sisters' fictional journey to the non-fiction account of a migrant boy's journey, and research Aztec mythology. After completing the novel, students write an essay explaining what allows one of the heroes of *Summer of the Mariposas* to be successful in specific moments.

Note: The excerpt from Sonia Nazario's *Enrique's Journey* describes a part of the migrant journey of a teenage Honduran boy traveling by himself. Certain students may have family members who have gone through similar experiences and this content may be sensitive for them. Be sure to preview selections and prepare students for what they will read.

Core texts your student will read:

- *Summer of the Mariposas* by Guadalupe Garcia McCall
- Excerpt from *The Odyssey,* a graphic novel by Gareth Hinds
- Excerpt from *The Odyssey* by Homer, translated by E.V. Rieu
- Excerpt from *Enrique's Journey* by Sonia Nazario

What my student will do/learn:

- Students explore characterization, tracking the actions and dialogue of characters throughout *Summer of the Mariposas,* and analyze the author's use of symbolism.
- Students connect the plot and characters of *Summer of the Mariposas* with those from Homer's *Odyssey* and consider how *Summer of the Mariposas* fits the hero's journey structure.
- Students read an excerpt from the non-fiction book *Enrique's Journey*, considering how the experiences of a migrant teen contrast with those of the Garza sisters in *Summer of the Mariposas.*
- Students research Aztec mythology and create Lotería cards to present key figures.
- Students engage in fishbowl discussions to discuss the major themes of the novel, including the ideas of a family being "lost" and "made whole."
- Students continue to use key classroom routines, including the sharing routine, during which classmates respond to shared writing by noting one effective way the writer used details or evidence.

- Students continue to write in response to prompts 2–3 times weekly, and practice analytic writing in response to text by developing a controlling idea or claim and providing support with details or evidence.
- Students write an end-of-unit essay responding to the following prompt: What is a special characteristic or source of strength for one of the Garza sisters? How does this characteristic or strength help her succeed in any two moments of her hero's journey?

Here are some conversation starters that you can use during this unit to promote discussion and encourage continued learning with your student.

1. How would you describe the relationship between the sisters in *Summer of the Mariposas*? What about their relationships with others, including their mother and father? How do those relationships change throughout the novel?
2. What are some of the stages of the hero's journey? Can you give me an example of how something or someone from *Summer of the Mariposas* fits one of the stages?
3. McCall includes a number of Aztec or Mexican mythical characters. Why do you think she includes them? Who are some characters from your culture or heritage that might be interesting to include in a book or movie?
4. Can you share a piece of writing with me in which you provide evidence from the text to support your controlling idea or claim? (Provide feedback to your student by finding something in their writing that you can respond to as a reader. For example, "Using the detail about Odysseus's actions and the detail about Odilia crying because she feels guilty about her mother is a good way to show your idea about how they are different.")
5. Who do you think the hero is in *Summer of the Mariposas* and why? What qualities help her to be successful in difficult situations?

AmplifyELA

Welcome!

6F: The Titanic Collection

In 1912, the most celebrated ship in the world—the *Titanic*—sank on its maiden voyage. The events surrounding this sinking have fascinated people for over 100 years and involve a rich cast of characters, human aspiration, class divisions, heroism, and cowardice. In this Collection, students explore documents and conduct independent research to better understand the events behind the fateful night in 1912 when the *Titanic* sank in the North Atlantic Ocean. Students build information literacy skills and learn how to construct an evidence-based argument. They are each assigned a passenger from the *Titanic's* manifest and consider gender and class issues as they research and write narrative accounts from the point of view of their passenger. They also participate in a Socratic seminar in which they rely on their research to examine the complicated issues inherent in the *Titanic* story.

Throughout these activities, students learn to tell the difference between primary, secondary, and tertiary sources; determine if a source is credible; and understand the ethical uses of information. As students reach the end of the unit, they synthesize all of the skills they've developed to tackle a culminating research assignment—part essay, part multimedia project.

Core texts your student will read:

- Introduction from *Sinking of the "Titanic" Most Appalling Ocean Horror* by Jay Henry Mowbray, Ph.D., LL.D
- A Letter from Mary Lines
- Excerpt: "Testimony of Olaus Abelseth" from United States Senate Inquiry
- Excerpt: Chapter 7—"There Is Your Beautiful Nightdress Gone" from *A Night to Remember* by Walter Lord
- Excerpts from public domain: Final Wireless Transmissions Aboard the RMS *Titanic*
- Excerpt: Chapter 6—"Women and Children First!" from *Sinking of the Titanic and Great Sea Disasters* by Logan Marshall
- Untitled Poem read at the *Titanic* Memorial Dedication in Belfast, Ireland—June 1920, anonymous
- "MAY BE WAIFS' MOTHER. Mme. Navratil of Nice Believes Babies Saved from Titanic Are Hers." from *The New York Times*
- Discovery of the *Titanic* by *Lapham's Quarterly* editors
- "Rusticles on Titanic Contain New Iron-Eating Bacteria, Study Says" from *Epoch Times* by Jack Phillips
- Excerpt: "The Iceberg Was Only Part of It" from *The New York Times* by William J. Broad
- Letter from the Dock, Wharf, Riverside and General Workers' Union of Great Britain and Ireland

NOTE: Over 1500 people lost their lives when the Titanic sank, including men, women, and children. These passengers came from all walks of life, including many immigrating to the United States. Students may want to discuss their reaction to this disaster, including connections they may make to the immigration journeys of people they know.

What my student will do/learn:

- Students conduct fun and "low-stakes" scavenger hunts to become familiar with the range of texts and images included in this unit.
- Students learn how to construct research questions and identify appropriate and relevant websites and Internet sources for answers.
- Students assume the identity of an actual *Titanic* passenger, then research their experience and write a letter from their point of view.
- Students establish expectations, prepare questions for, and engage in a Socratic seminar, discussing the circumstances and consequences of the *Titanic* disaster.
- Students continue to write in response to prompts 2–3 times weekly, and practice analytic writing in response to text by developing a controlling idea or claim and providing support with details or evidence.
- Students write an end-of-unit essay responding to one of the following prompts:
    a. Research Option 1: Argumentative Essay: Who's to blame for the loss of life on the *Titanic*? Research a list of several parties involved in the tragedy. Some options include the *Titanic's* Captain Smith, the telegraph officers, the *Titanic's* lookouts, the captain of the *Carpathia*, and the White Star Line's owners and shipbuilders. Research sources in the Collection and on the Internet to collect evidence and prove your case. Write an argumentative essay identifying the guilty party and include 2 pieces of evidence proving their guilt. Be sure to include a list of the resources you used in your research.
    b. Research Option 2: Informative Essay: Who were the *Titanic* Orphans? Write an informative essay detailing the experience of the 2 young children known as the *Titanic* Orphans. As you conduct your research, be sure to look for relevant facts and concrete details about their lives before they boarded the doomed *Titanic*, how they managed to survive the sinking, and what happened to them after the disaster. Be sure to include a list of resources used while researching this project.
- Students also create a digital timeline to share their essay research with the class.

Here are some conversation starters that you can use during this unit to promote discussion and encourage continued learning with your student:

1. As you worked to evaluate sources, what did you notice about the credible websites? What advice might you give a friend looking for information on the Internet?
2. What qualities does an effective research question have?
3. What are some facts you learned about the circumstances and/or consequences of the *Titanic* disaster?
4. Can you share the letter you wrote as a *Titanic* passenger? (Provide feedback to your student by finding something in their writing that you can respond to as a reader. For example, "I like how you write that your supper included gruel, making your passenger's third class experience clearer.")

Amplify ELA

Welcome!

Grade 6: Grammar

In this unit, students complete self-guided grammar instruction and practice that teachers will assign to them throughout the year. Sub-units are organized by key grammar topics, so teachers can assign the content that best meets your student's needs while making sure students work with the key grammar topics within the TEKS for their grade. Each lesson follows the same overall structure: an opening activity that explains how to use the lesson, followed by a series of activities that contain key instruction and practice for each topic, and ending with a revision assignment that allows students to apply their deeper understanding of grammatical topics to their own writing.

What my student will do/learn:

- Students complete largely self-guided lessons, which follow the same format throughout the unit.
- Students may first review their foundational understanding of a topic before exploring more advanced concepts within that topic.
- Students engage in revision assignments at the end of each lesson, applying new grammar knowledge to their own writing and considering the impact of those changes.

Here are some conversation starters that you can use during this unit to promote discussion and encourage continued learning with your student.

1. How did you feel about working through the grammar lessons mostly independently? When did you feel confident during the process? When did you feel like you needed a bit more guidance?
2. As you identified examples of different grammatical topics in your writing (complete sentences, pronouns, verb use, etc.), did anything stand out to you? Were you surprised by how much grammar you already know, even if you didn't realize what each component was called?
3. Can you share a piece of writing with me in which you made a grammar change (in a sentence or part of a sentence) or correction based on what you learned in the lesson? (Provide feedback to your student by finding something in their writing that you can respond to as a reader. For example, "I really like how you identified and corrected the fragments in this piece of writing. These changes make it easier for me to follow your thoughts.)
4. After revising your work to use your knowledge of grammar and conventions, how did you feel about the result? How might revising with a focus on grammar make a difference in your writing in the future?

AmplifyELA

Welcome!

Poetry in America: Grade 6

In this unit, students study poetry using lessons designed in partnership with Poetry in America, whose mission is to bring poetry into classrooms and living rooms around the world. Each sub-unit contains three lessons focused on one poem; students may work through all sub-units at one time, or each sub-unit may be taught independently. Students have time to understand what the poem is describing, to look carefully at the language and form the poet uses, and to reflect on the poem's topic and themes. They have conversations about the poem with their classmates and also listen to poets, celebrities, academics, and everyday citizens discuss the poem in embedded videos within the lessons. Students have the opportunity to try on the poet's use of language, craft, and structure in creative writing assignments.

In Sub-unit 1, students work with Richard Blanco's poem "Looking for The Gulf Motel," which recalls a childhood vacation with his Cuban immigrant family.

In Sub-unit 2, Coleman Barks's poem "Glad" playfully juxtaposes a young girl's heroics on the soccer field with the imagery and diction of an epic gladiatorial battle.

In Sub-unit 3, students consider the personal and cultural background that African American poet Richard Hayden drew on for his iconic poem "Those Winter Sundays."

Core texts your student will read:

- "Looking for The Gulf Motel" by Richard Blanco
- "Glad" by Coleman Barks
- "Those Winter Sundays" by Robert Hayden

What my student will do/learn:

In Sub-unit 1, students work with Richard Blanco's poem "Looking for The Gulf Motel."

- Students discuss how Blanco uses the "mirror effect" to allow readers to connect their own childhood memories to his descriptions of special times with his family.
- Students take a turn at composing their own version of a "Gulf Motel" poem.

In Sub-unit 2, students work with Coleman Barks's poem "Glad."

- Students analyze Barks's use of language and the sonnet form to help them reflect on what the poem may be saying about the meaning of winning and losing.
- Students have the chance to write a poem about their own "Glad" moment of unexpected heroism.

In Sub-unit 3, students work with Richard Hayden's poem "Those Winter Sundays."

- Students build their knowledge of the blues musical form and the sonnet poetic form and discuss how those influences are reflected in Hayden's poem.
- Students use his poem as an inspiration for writing their own ode to an unsung hero in their life.

Amplify ELA

Welcome!

6G: Beginning Story Writing

In this unit, students get to practice their creative writing skills, learning the elements of storytelling and character development, and the importance of vivid language. Students gain a sense of ownership over their writing as they experiment with the impact of their authorial choices on sentences, language, character traits, and plot twist. As students consider how to use these elements to create a story, they also gain tools to help them effectively and incisively analyze a piece of literature.

Students begin with creating a character, observing and recording details, and writing about their character in mundane situations to make them nuanced and believable. This situational setting allows students to create a secondary character for their own story and develop dialogue. After some explicit instruction about the structure of a story, students pull all their skills together to write a story and practice the most important part of creative writing—revision.

What my student will do/learn:

- Students work to create a believable character for their short story, getting to know their character by writing about their actions and internal thoughts in various situations.
- Students review the shape of a story and apply understanding of plot elements to their own writing.
- Students balance dialogue with narration and punctuate dialogue properly.
- Students revise, paying particular attention to dialogue and its formatting as well as its balance with narration.
- Students edit their paper, paying particular attention to conventions and transitions, and create a final copy.

Here are some conversation starters that you can use during this unit to promote discussion and encourage continued learning with your student.

1. Describe your character. What do you imagine they look like? How would you describe their personality?
2. What is the setting of your story? In what ways does this setting make sense for your character? How did the setting help reveal more about your character's personality?
3. What advice about the use of dialogue would you give to someone writing a short story?
4. Imagine I'm a movie executive or major publisher. Read me the most exciting or important scene in your story that you think will convince me that this is the next big blockbuster film or bestselling novel. (Provide feedback to your student by finding something in their story that you can respond to as a reader. For example, "I liked when you described the setting as 'darker than a cave' because I can picture how dark a cave would be.")
5. What worked well for you in this writing process? What might you do differently the next time you craft a short story?

Here are some conversation starters that you can use during this unit to promote discussion and encourage continued learning with your student.

Read the poem "Looking for The Gulf Motel" with your student.

1. What line in the poem gave you a strong picture of this family?
2. Which line or description made you think of something in your own experience?
3. Can you point out a place where Blanco used a sensory detail that helped you see, smell, taste, or hear what he was describing?
4. Can you share the poem you wrote in the style of "Looking for The Gulf Motel"? (Provide feedback to your student by celebrating their poem and responding to something specific as a reader. For example, "The line in your poem, 'my stomach climbs and dives along with the roller coaster,' reminds me of how much you love amusement parks.")

Read the poem "Glad" with your student.

1. What makes this one girl feel glad—in spite of her team's loss? Which line best describes her sense of being glad?
2. Who were the gladiators? Why do you think the poet wants us to think of gladiators when we read this poem?
3. Can you share the poem you wrote in the style of "Glad"? (Provide feedback to your student by celebrating their poem and responding to something specific as a reader. For example, "It was a great idea to write about your mile run in PE class as an epic journey! I like the sounds when you describe the start as 'a crowd of crabby competitors.' ")

Read the poem "Those Winter Sundays" with your student.

1. In these lessons, you watched President Biden discuss the poem and his relationship with his father. What did you learn about the President's understanding of this poem?
2. What do you think this poet wants to say about the relationship between this speaker and his father? Which line really seems to communicate this idea to you?
3. What are some of the sounds that stick out to you as you read the poem? What types of emotions do you think those sounds communicate?
4. Can you share the poem you wrote in the style of "Those Winter Sundays"? (Provide feedback to your student by celebrating their poem and responding to something specific as a reader. For example, "This poem about our neighbor's patience in caring for her elderly mother really celebrates her gentle manner. It is really important to notice things like this. Thank you for sharing it.")