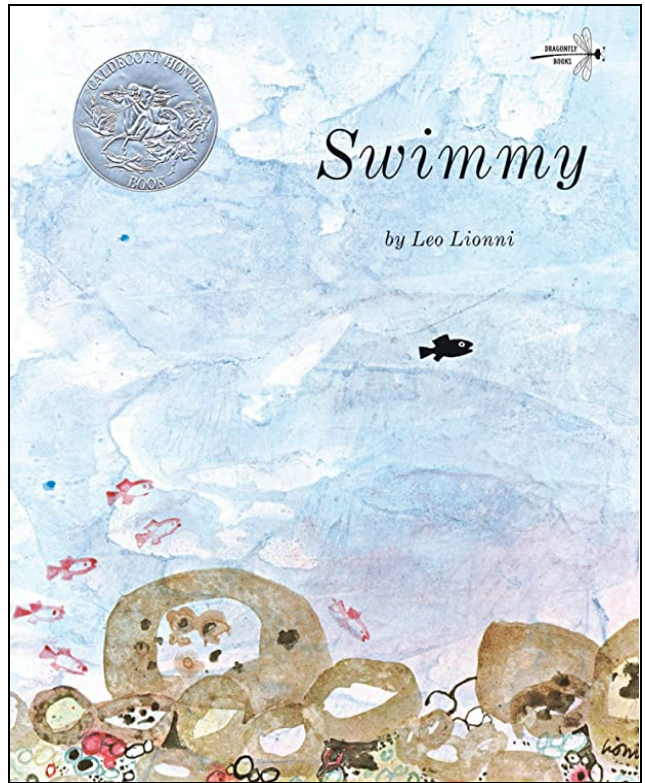


**8th Grade: Unit 1 Topic 2: The Identity of Others****Essential Questions:**

- What are the forces that shape our identities as we grow up?

**Suggested Pacing:** 30 days



**Background:** In seventh grade, students studied the theme of texts through the lens of developing empathy and making connections with others. In this unit, students will add another layer of understanding to this idea by investigating how authors craft themes designed to influence the identity of readers

**Task:** Students will read a selection of children’s picture books with a focus on identifying the theme of each story and analyzing how it develops across the text. They will also pay attention to the language choices in the texts, and explore how authors use figurative language and imagery to convey their themes in creative ways. They will use their findings to reflect back on the essential question of how authors of children’s books encourage positive identity development in their readers. Their culminating project will be to create a children’s book of their own that conveys a positive theme for a young audience.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this task is to continue thinking about identity development. Students will think critically about how media made for children is designed to convey positive messages and encourage young people to develop positive character traits. They will also deepen their ability to think critically about texts, analyzing the language, characters, setting, and plot of a story to determine how an author develops a theme.

**Getting Started:**

Display the essential question and previous student thinking on the board and remind students that throughout this unit, we are studying the forces that shape our identity. In the first part of our unit, we looked specifically at the influence of other people. For the second part of our unit, we will be looking at the types of media people consume when they are young, and how that can influence them.

Pose the following questions to the class:

- What are some examples of books, movies, TV shows, etc. that you remember watching or reading when you were young?
- What are some specific characters or situations from your favorite books, shows, or movies that stand out in your mind? Why have these characters or moments stayed with you?

Allow students time to confer in small groups. Have them write some of their favorite characters and moments on sticky notes and add them to a piece of chart paper at the front of the room. Their responses should include specific examples, not just titles. Go over some of the responses with the whole group, then pose the question:

- Kids spend a lot of time watching and reading different forms of media when they are little. How might what they consume influence their identity?

Collect their thinking on chart paper and display it somewhere in the room. Refer to it throughout the unit as relevant connections are made.

**Making Meaning:**

Teachers will begin by reading Swimmy by Leo Lionni aloud to the class.

After reading, allow students to work with a partner to discuss what they think the theme of the story might be, and how the author conveys that theme to the reader. Questions to consider include:

- What does the author hope to teach readers?
- How do the illustrations help get their message across?
- Is there any figurative language or imagery present to bring the story to life?
- What traits does the main character start with? Which traits do they end with?

Students can show their thinking through an entry in their reader's notebook or a different activity of the teacher's choice (Pear Deck, Padlet, sticky notes, chart paper, etc.)

Explain that we will continue investigating these questions over the next several days by looking at more children's books and short film clips.

**Investigation:**

Put students in groups of 2 or 3, maximum, and have each group select a picture book to work with for this investigation. In groups, students will read the picture book, annotate with sticky notes, and then prepare an anchor chart about their book for the class, which they will present during this phase of the topic.

Available texts for this unit include:

- Different - A Great Thing to Be by Heather Avis
- Each Kindness - Jacqueline Woodson
- Elena's Serenade - Campbell Geeslin
- Just Ask! Be Different, Be Brave, Be You - Sonia Sotomayor
- Salt in his Shoes - Roslyn Jordan and Deloris Jordan
- The Giving Tree - Shel Silverstein
- The North Star - Peter Reynolds
- The Proudest Blue - Ibtihaj Muhammad
- The Undefeated - Kwame Alexander and Cadir Nelson
- Watercress - Andrea Wang
- Wings - Christopher Myers

First, students will analyze the cover of their picture book. Students will discuss the following questions as they view both the front and back cover of the picture book. Students can share what they see, think or wonder on a small poster.

- What types of images, people or places are depicted on the cover?
- Why do you think those images, people or places were chosen?
- Are there certain words in the title that stand out to you? Why do you think those words were chosen?
- What is not included in the cover? Why do you think it was omitted?
- Based on what you see, what can you infer about what the book will be about?

Next, read and annotate the picture book, paying attention to:

- Theme

- Figurative Language
- Characterization
- Objective summary of the story

Students should have sticky notes that encompass all four of these areas as well as sticky notes that communicate their thinking about the cover.

During the course of this phase of the learning, students will have an opportunity to engage in [mini-lessons about each area of study](#). They should create their anchor charts in accordance with the pace of the lessons, so that they are working on their anchor charts throughout the duration of this phase. The group should maintain their own copy of the picture book with their sticky notes and ideas.

They should also maintain a reader's notebook where they are discussing ideas about each of the primary instructional areas, pulling quotes and parts of the text as evidence to support their thinking about theme, characterization, plot, and figurative language. Sticky notes should also summarize the different parts of the plot that are revealed. The student's reader's notebook will be the primary source for their learning about theme, figurative language, characterization and summary writing.

When their anchor charts are complete, students can present them to their classmates and stick them to the walls for reference during the rest of the topic.

Mini-Lessons will focus on:

- Writing an objective summary of a text
- Identifying the theme of a story
- Describing how the theme of a text is connected to its character, setting, and plot
- Analyzing how a theme develops over the course of a text

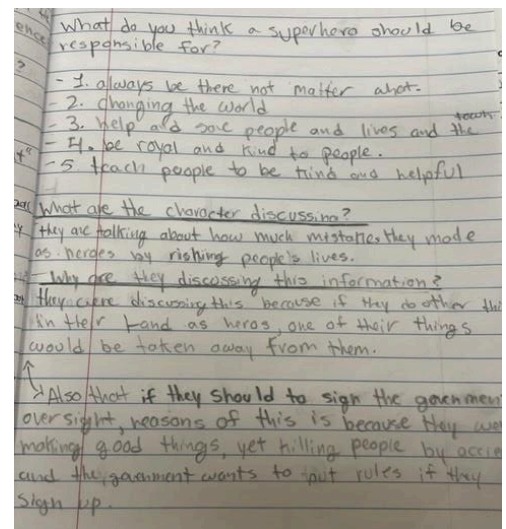
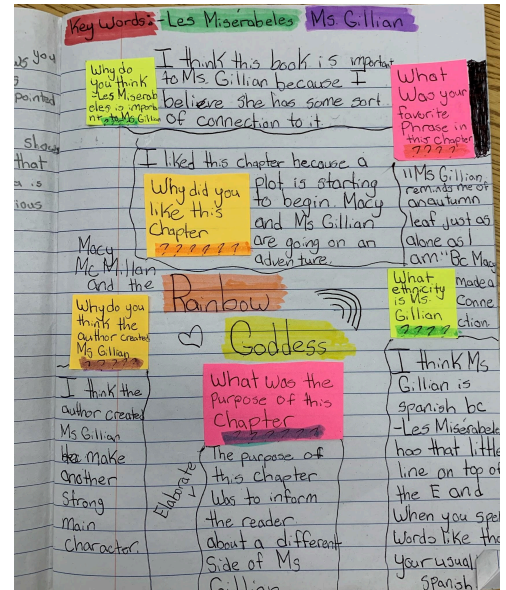
Throughout each mini-lesson, students will have the opportunity to practice the skills they are learning on their own using a selection of different children's picture books and film clips. They will also meet regularly in groups to work collaboratively and discuss their findings. Each mini-lesson is structured around the essential question for the unit, with discussion points and assignments continually asking students to reflect on how the themes present in the picture books might influence the children reading them.

Students will use their reading notebook (physical or digital) to capture their thoughts. See the [Unit 1 Quick Reference Guide](#) for details.

### Create and Produce:

After finishing their analysis of several pieces of children's media, students will create an original children's book centered around a positive theme. They will develop a theme, characters, setting, and plot for their story and use imagery and figurative language to make their story come alive for their audience. Students can make a physical book or use Book Creator to create a digital book.

The teacher will introduce the assignment to students using the instruction sheet and teacher exemplar linked below. As students write, the teacher will guide students through the steps of the writing process, confer with students, and pull small groups as needed to work on different writing skills.



[Children's Book Slides](#)

[Children's Book Example on Book Creator](#)

[Sample Children's Book Assignment](#)

[Children's Book Instructions](#)

[Children's Book Brainstorming Sheet](#)

[Children's Book Storyboard Planning Sheet \(optional\)](#)

[Children's Book Edit/Revise Checklist](#)

[Children's Book Peer Feedback Form](#)

[Story Share Form](#)

**Communicate and Present:**

Students will share their books with each other in a small group. The teacher can also select some volunteers that would like to share with the whole class. If Book Creator is used classwide, the teacher can also create a digital shelf containing all of the books for students to view.

**Reflection:**

Students will reflect on the following questions in their reader's notebooks:

- What did this process teach you about creating children's literature?
- What was challenging about it? How do authors try to send positive messages to their readers?