

8th Grade: Unit 3 Entry Task: Literary Nonfiction

Essential Questions:

- How do authors use literary techniques to enhance nonfiction writing?

Suggested Pacing: 3-4 Days



Background: In seventh grade, students studied the nonfiction genre. They are familiar with how authors use nonfiction techniques to deepen their readers’ understanding about a topic. They have also investigated author bias, and how this can impact the type of information being delivered in a nonfiction text. In this unit, they will expand upon that knowledge by exploring how authors can use literary techniques to enhance nonfiction writing, increasing engagement for the reader.

Task: Students will analyze the differences between a literary nonfiction passage and a typical nonfiction passage about the same topic, then use their findings to develop a class definition for literary nonfiction and create an infographic that depicts the features and purpose of literary nonfiction.

Purpose: This task will introduce students to the genre being studied in this unit, literary nonfiction. Students will also begin discussing the purpose of writing nonfiction in this way and how literary techniques can enhance nonfiction information, a discussion that will be continued and refined throughout the unit as students explore how fiction and nonfiction attributes contribute to a true story.

Getting Started:

Teacher will display these [slides](#) to the class to get started on this entry task. As a warm up, teachers will display the term “literary” on the board. Students will begin to describe what they think it means, or what they think of when they hear this word. Students will be encouraged to use word parts to guess at a possible definition. After students have had a chance to share their thoughts, the teacher will explain that *literary* means, “concerning the writing, study, or content of literature.” Essentially, it is a word we use to describe texts, especially ones that are considered to be well written, with a lot of style. What assumptions could we make when we hear the word *literary*?

Students will be reading a type of nonfiction known as “literary nonfiction” in this unit. In getting started, students will work to figure out what that genre is. Students will determine its definition by comparing it to other types of texts and analyzing the differences.

Making Meaning:

The teacher will display an image of the *Titanic* on the board. Ask students to discuss what they already know about this topic through a turn and talk. After students talk with their peers, [view the short Titanic clip](#). Bring the class back together and allow a few students to share their thoughts with the class. Ensure there are no major misconceptions and make sure that everyone understands that the *Titanic* is a large ship that famously sank on its first voyage in 1912, killing many of its passengers and crew. Next, distribute the [Titanic passages](#) to students. There is background information at the top of the passages to further help with this if students would benefit from additional clarification.



Allow students time to read through the passages and annotate their findings. Ask them to note what is different between the way the passages are written. After students have had time to write and discuss in their groups, have a few volunteers share their findings with the class. After the discussion is concluded, tell the students that one of the passages is nonfiction and the other is literary nonfiction. Ask them which one is which. They should be able to identify passage #2 as the literary nonfiction one and offer some preliminary reasoning (e.g. “it sounds more like a book,” or “it uses figurative language,” or “it sounds like a story,” etc.)

Wrap up this portion of the lesson by asking students to write a definition for literary nonfiction in their notebooks and share out.

Investigation:

Students will investigate two different pieces of non fiction texts. One text will focus on literary nonfiction, the other nonfiction. Having paired texts side by side, students will annotate as they read the differences between the two texts. As students to focus on comparing the two passages. Again one will be nonfiction and one will be literary nonfiction. They should annotate the passages, describing the differences between how the two are written. They can work together in groups on their analysis.

Text Sets:

- [Triangle Fire Text Set](#)
- [Alexander Hamilton Text Set](#)
- [Nellie Bly Text Set](#)

When students are finished reading and annotating, ask each group to share some of their findings with the class.

Teacher can use the following questions to prompt students share aloud:

- What did you notice is different about the two texts?
- What specific examples of comparisons can you share?
- What impact do these differences have on your understanding of the nonfiction topic?
- Which nonfiction do you find more informative/interesting? Why?

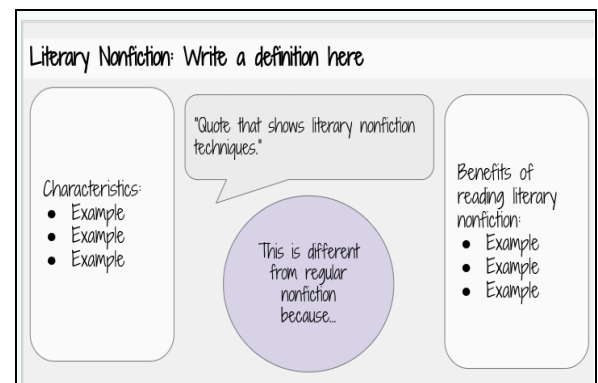
As students share, the teacher should clarify that reading the same nonfiction topic can be conveyed differently and impacts the reader differently when engaging with a text.

Create and Produce:

Students will create an infographic about literary nonfiction. They can use a piece of chart paper, a large piece of construction paper, or create a digital version. Their infographic should include:

- A definition for literary nonfiction
- Some characteristics of literary nonfiction
- How it differs from traditional nonfiction
- Examples from the text set they read in class
- Some benefits of reading literary nonfiction

To assist students needing a starting point, teachers can provide this [sample](#) to guide students. This will give students a visual idea of how to organize their infographic about literary nonfiction.



Communicate and Present:

Students can present their work using one of the following options. Teachers should select the option that works best for their students and their teaching style.

- Option 1: Have students hang their infographics and conduct a gallery walk.

- Option 2: Students will share their infographics within a small group and select a few volunteers to share with the whole class.

Reflection:

As a closing activity, create a class anchor chart to display in the room about literary nonfiction. The chart should be co-constructed with student input. At minimum, the chart should include a definition and a list of characteristics.

This chart should be referred to and added to throughout the unit.