

Unit 1: Friendship & Fairness

8th Grade Language Arts

22 Class Meetings

Revised October 2025

Essential Questions

- What strategies do a reader use to read with purpose and focus?
- How do authors use characters, settings, and plot to convey the theme?
- How can we clearly argue our ideas in writing and discussion?

Enduring Understandings with Unit Goals

EU 1: Authors intentionally use literary elements and writing style to convey meaning.

- Students will analyze how authors use conflict, literary elements, character interactions, and figurative language to develop a theme.
- Students will examine how dialogue and specific moments in a story reveal change in a character or provoke a character's decision.
- Students will analyze how characters, events, and ideas develop and interact in texts.

EU 2: Strong readers use close reading strategies to make sense of the text and characters, using implicit and explicit textual information to make inferences and draw conclusions.

- Students will read closely to analyze relevant evidence that is thoroughly explained.
- Students will write to justify specific claims about the novel using relevant, contextualized evidence and detailed explanations.

EU 3: The persuasiveness of an oral argument depends on the presentation of relevant evidence in a focused, coherent manner.

- Students will determine central ideas and themes of a text and present their ideas in writing.
- Students will present thoroughly researched, written, and revised oral arguments in a discussion.

Standards

Common Core State Standards:

- **RL.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.
- **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.
- **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.8.4:** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including analogies or allusions to other texts.
- **RL.8.5:** Compare and contrast the structure of two or more texts and analyze how the

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differing structure of each text contributes to its meaning and style.

- **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.
- **W.8.1:** Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.
 - **W.8.1.a:** Introduce claim(s), acknowledge and distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and organize the reasons and evidence logically.
 - **W.8.1.b:** Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant evidence, using accurate, credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text.
 - **W.8.1.c:** Use words, phrases, and clauses to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.
 - **W.8.1.d:** Establish and maintain a formal style.
 - **W.8.1.e:** Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.
- **W.8.4:** Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- **W.8.5:** With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed.
- **W.8.9:** Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.
- **W.8.10:** Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.
- **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.
 - **SL.8.1.C:** Pose questions that connect the ideas of several speakers and respond to others' questions and comments with relevant evidence, observations, and ideas.
 - **SL.8.1.D:** Acknowledge new information expressed by others, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views in light of the evidence presented.
- **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.8.1:** Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
- **L.8.2:** Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

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- **L.8.3:** Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.
- **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.8.5:** Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

ISAAC Vision of the Graduate Competencies

Competency 1: Write effectively for a variety of purposes.

Competency 2: Speak to diverse audiences in an accountable manner.

Competency 3: Develop the behaviors needed to interact and contribute with others on a team.

Competency 4: Analyze and solve problems independently and collaboratively.

Competency 5: Be responsible, creative, and empathetic members of the community.

Unit Content Overview

1. Reading a variety of texts to Understand Literary Elements

- Analyzing a variety of short stories, poetry and a novel to understand literary
- Compare similar character development and themes across a variety of texts including non-fiction and poetry.
- **Key Terms:** theme, central idea, main idea, annotate, summarize, characterization, plot, dramatic irony, point of view, support, conclusion, text structure, key details, justify, word choice, inference, author's point of view/message, author's intent/purpose, setting

2. Reading to find the best text evidence

- Determine the theme in the story and trace how the author develops theme through character development and other literary elements.
- Compare authors' style and techniques in illustrating similar themes and support the comparison with specific text evidence.

3. Vocabulary: Vocabulary: Rivalry, unfathomable, size up, incredulous, rumble, aloofness, elite, smoldering, apprehensive, defiance, indignant, conviction, delinquent, aghast, exploit, conformity, motive, deduce/deduction, juvenile, suspect, acquitted, truce, circumstances

Interdisciplinary Connection:

- Social Studies, Civics, Government

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Daily Learning Objectives with TWPS

Students will be able to...

- Identify explicit details and implicit information to support provided inferences about a variety of short stories .
 - *What is an inference? Why is it important to make inferences when we read?*
- Analyze characters' traits, motivations, and actions using text evidence to support their ideas.
 - **
 - *Is it better to judge someone by their family and social status or is it best to give them a chance to prove themselves?*
 - *Which character is most like a typical teenager or someone to whom you can relate?*
 - *Which character's decision has had the biggest impact on the story so far?*
- Describe the cause and effect of key events and details in *The Outsiders*.
 - *Were there other choices the character could have made? How might those have changed the story?*
- Determine meanings of words based on context.
 - *What is context and how does a reader use context to determine the meaning of an unknown word?*
- Compare and contrast the characters in the novel and other short stories or poems read.
 - *Describe how characters face conflict and handle adversity. What can you learn from these characters?*
- Analyze how particular elements of the story interact, including how characters' traits, motivations and actions influence the plot.*
 - *What challenges do the characters face? How do they handle them?*
 - *How does the story change based on a particular character's actions or decisions?*
- Explain how characters change as the story progresses.
 - *In what ways has the main character grown or changed? Do you think this change was inevitable? Why or why not?*
- Determine themes or central ideas of *The Outsiders* using relevant and supporting details.*
 - *How do you determine the theme of a story? Think about the messages that have repeated throughout the novel.*
 - *What lessons have the characters learned by the end of the novel? Support with the strongest text evidence.*
- Analyze the impact of figurative language and symbolism in "Nothing Gold Can Stay."
 - *Compare and contrast the poem and novel. How does the poem connect with the theme of the novel?*
 - *What symbols appear repeatedly in the text, and what do they represent?*
- Demonstrate an understanding of author's point of view in the novel, *The Outsiders*. *
 - *Is life always fair? How do you handle an unfair situation?*
 - *Do you think the characters were unfairly judged? How did they respond to their circumstances?*
- Analyze the development of the central idea in a non-fiction text. *
 - *Should teenagers be held fully responsible for their actions, given their brains are still developing?*
 - *Compare the informational article to the novel we just read. What similarities did you find in teenage behavior?*

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- Analyze how the poet's repetition of words and phrases develops the theme in novel and *Hanging Fire*.
 - *Does adolescence naturally create more conflict between teenagers and parents, or is it mostly due to misunderstandings?*
- Draft a short essay including text evidence and clear reasoning. **
 - *What has been a powerful piece of evidence or quote you have read so far?*
 - *What do powerful introductions and conclusions include?*
- Revise and edit writing to include clear ideas, strong evidence and transition words.
 - *What has been the most difficult part about writing?*

Instructional Strategies/Differentiated Instruction

- Whole group instruction
- Guided notes
- Paragraph frames and sentence starters
- Student-led instruction
- Teacher modeling
- Written feedback
- Think-pair-share and small-group discussions
- Graphic organizers
- Cornell notes
- Accountable talk
- Homework
- Word walls with visuals
- Anchor charts
- Small group instruction
- Conferencing
- Text and video chunking with guiding questions
- Close reading with text-dependent questions

EL DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION:

- Explicit modeling
- Guided and independent practice
- Small group instruction
- Strategic grouping
- Key vocabulary
- Graphic organizers
- KWL charts
- Venn diagrams
- Reinforcing contextual definition
- Predicting and inferring
- Glossary
- Sentence starters
- Word banks

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Assessments

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENTS

- TWPS
- Student discussions and responses
- Exit Tickets
- Annotated Test
- Gist & Summaries
- Accountable Talk Discussions
- Completed notes
- Completed graphic organizers
- Homework
- Text dependent question responses
- Close reading notes and text annotations
- In-class work
- Verbal check-ins
- Vocabulary check

SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENTS:

- Quiz 1 (EU 1, EU 2)
- Quiz 2 (EU 1, EU 2)
- Unit 1 Test (IAB: Read Literary Texts)

Unit Task

Unit Task Name: Character Analysis

Description: How does justice look for the teens in the novel *The Outsiders*? In this unit task, students will trace how the author develops the characters and themes from the beginning to the end of the novel. Students will select the strongest text evidence and powerful quotes related to the theme of justice, friendship, and identity. From this they will draw conclusions to argue how a teen's experiences shape their identity.

Students will (1) analyze the story for evidence supporting their claim; (2) write a speech from the character's point of view and defend their actions, (3) write summary paragraphs including a conclusion that connects to the ideas of justice ; and (3) participate in a discussion to argue their point of view. (EU 1) (EU 2) (EU3).

Evaluation: Teacher Created Literary Analysis Rubric

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Unit Resources

- *The Outsiders* by S.E. Hinton
- *The Party* by Pam Munoz
- *Nothing Gold Can Stay* by Robert Frost
- *The Road Not Traveled* by Robert Frost
- *Alone* by Maya Angelou
- *Hanging Fire* by Audre Lorde
- Notebook
- Compression Strategies PowerPoint
- Venn Diagram
- Evidence Tracker Graphic Organizer
- Laptops
- SBAC Prep Materials
- IAB Resource Materials
- Pear Assessment
- Frayer Model