

Unit 2: Ideas Worth Sharing
8th Grade Language Arts
20 Class Meetings

Updated January 2026

Essential Questions

- How does a writer craft an informative/explanatory text that examines a topic and conveys ideas and information clearly?
- What strategies can readers apply to understand complex informational texts?

Enduring Understandings with Unit Goals

EU 1: Readers use various strategies to construct meaning from text and choose different strategies depending on the type of text they are reading.

- Compare and contrast texts for structure, purpose, and viewpoint to determine how differing structure contributes to meaning and style.
- Examine how authors make connections among and distinctions between individuals, ideas, or events to develop and refine a concept.
- Analyze and track the central idea and key details of an informational text and recognize and assess the author’s point of view by analyzing how the author presents information.

EU 2: Strong text analysis requires relevant evidence that is thoroughly explained.

- Engage in the writing process to write an engaging informative/explanatory text that examines a student-selected topic and conveys ideas and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

EU 3: Public speaking and communication skills are critical for intellectual development, career trajectory and civic engagement.

- Present a three-minute TED Talk using verbal and nonverbal presentation skills to confidently and effectively deliver a well-supported message.

Standards

Common Core State Standards:

- **RI.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.
- **RI.8.2:** Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to supporting ideas; provide an objective summary of the text.
- **RI.8.3:** Analyze how a text makes connections among and distinctions between individuals, ideas, or events (e.g., through comparisons, analogies, or categories)
- **RI.8.4:** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including analogies or allusions to other texts.

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- **RI.8.5:** Analyze in detail the structure of a specific paragraph in the text, including the role of particular sentences in developing and refining a key concept.
- **RI.8.6:** Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how the author acknowledges and responds to conflicting evidence or viewpoints.
- **RI.8.7:** Evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of using different mediums (e.g., print, or digital text, video, multimedia) to present a particular topic or idea.
- **W.8.2:** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.
 - **W.8.2.A:** Introduce a topic clearly, previewing what is to follow; organize ideas, concepts, and information into broader categories; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., charts, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.
 - **W.8.2.B:** Develop the topic with relevant, well-chosen facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.
 - **W.8.2.C:** Use appropriate and varied transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.
 - **W.8.2.D:** Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.
 - **W.8.2.E:** Establish and maintain a formal style.
 - **W.8.2.F:** Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation 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.8.8:** Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.
- **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.

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- **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.
- **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.
- **L.8.6:** Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases; gather vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.

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

- **Reading Informational Texts**
 - **Key Terms:** informational text, key detail, central idea, comparisons, support, evidence, claim, inference, author's point of view, author's intent, author's message, author's purpose, conclusion, conclusion drawn, context, summarize, suggest, point of view/viewpoint, quotation, excerpt, peer-review, self-review
 - **Vocabulary:** enunciation, projection, TED Talk, narrative, argument, message, articulate, gestures, eye contact, visual aids, formatting, audience, active listening, feedback, constructive

Interdisciplinary Connection:

- Math
- Art
- Music
- Social Studies: History, Civics, Government
- Science

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Daily Learning Objectives with TWPS

Students will be able to...

- Explain the components of an effective TED Talk.
 - *What makes a speaker engaging? Explain how a speaker sustains the audience's attention.*
- Determine the central idea of an article.
 - *What is a central idea?*
- Determine the meaning of unknown words using context clues.
 - *How do you track the development of a central idea over the course of a text?*
- Analyze an informational text to find the best evidence to support ideas.
 - *What are context clues and how can you use them to help you find the meaning of a word you do not know?*
- Identify the presentation skills necessary for delivering a TED Talk.
 - *What are the crucial elements needed to deliver an interesting presentation?*
- Identify the text structure features of an informational text.
 - *Why do we care about the author's point of view?*
- Analyze how a text makes connections among multiple ideas.
 - *How does understanding a text's structure help us better understand the text overall?*
- Brainstorm their TED Talk topic.
 - *Based on the TED Talks you viewed, what are some topics you could present?*
 - *What makes evidence strong? What makes evidence weak?*
- Create a multi-paragraph outline. **
 - *Why is it important to create an outline before you start to write?*
 - *What has been the most difficult part of creating your MPO so far?*
- Write a full draft of their TED Talk.
 - *What is the most challenging part of the writing process for you?*
- Explain the author's point of view and purpose.
 - *Why is it important for authors to have a point of view when they write?*
- Revise the full draft of their TED Talk. **
 - *How can a speaker use tone to better reach their audience?*
 - *What do you want your audience to think, feel, or do after hearing your TED Talk?*
- Analyze and apply effective presentation techniques to enhance their own speaking skills.*
 - *Which is more important for delivering a strong presentation: confident delivery or well-prepared content and why?*
 - *What are three qualities that make someone an effective presenter and why?*
- Present their TED Talk using appropriate public speaking skills. **

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 discussion⁴
- Graphic organizers
- Cornell notes

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- 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:

- Prompting, questioning, elaborating, facilitate higher level thinking skills
- Explicit modeling
- Guided and independent practice
- Small group instruction
- Strategic grouping
- Key vocabulary
- Graphic organizers
- KWL charts
- Venn diagrams
- Sequence writing
- Reinforcing contextual definition
- Predicting and inferring
- Glossaries
- Sentence starters

Assessments

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENTS:

- TWPS
- Student discussions and responses
- Exit Slips
- Accountable Talk Discussions
- Completed notes
- Completed graphic organizers
- Homework
- Text dependent question responses
- Close reading notes and text annotations
- In-Class work and collaborative slides

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- Verbal Check-Ins
- Vocabulary Checks
- Grammar and Usage Checks
- Unit Task- TED Talk
 - Accountable Talk and Presentation Scoring Guide

SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENTS:

- Quiz 1 (EU 1)
- Quiz 2 (EU 1)
- Unit Task- TED Talk (TED Talk Scoring Guide) (EU 2, EU3)
- Unit 2 Test (IAB: Read Informational Texts)

Unit Task

Unit Task Name: TED Talk

Description: In this task, students will brainstorm an “idea worth sharing” to create their own three-to-five-minute TED Talk. Students will organize their thoughts and writing to create an engaging TED Talk accompanied by at least three visual aids that they will present to their class. (EU 2).

During their presentation, students will use a sophisticated blend of narrative, argumentative, and informative writing to convey a clear message well-supported by researched facts. Students will also be evaluated on their speaking skills including volume and speed, enunciation, effective uses of pauses and gestures, and effective eye contact with the audience. (EU 3).

Evaluation: TED Talk Scoring Guide

Unit Resources

- Three-Minute TED Talk: *Try something new for 30 days* by Matt Cutts
- Three Minute TED Talk: *What Adults Can Learn From Kids TED Talk* by Adora Svitak
- Three-Minute TED Talk: *How to start a movement* by Derek Sivers
- Common Lit Articles for Target Lessons:
 - Identifying Main Ideas
 - Finding the Meaning of Unknown Words
 - Finding the Best Evidence
 - Analyzing the Author’s Point of View
 - Analyzing Text Structures
 - Connecting Ideas
- TED-Ed resources
- Worksheets
- Laptops
- SBAC Prep Online
- IAB Resources Online
- Pear Assessment