

Unit 3: Utopian Dreams, Dystopian Nightmares

8th Grade Language Arts

20 Class Meetings

Updated May 2026

Essential Questions

- How much should the government be able to control and limit your individual rights for the good of society?
- How can society balance individualism with responsibility to community?
- Is it worth sacrificing knowledge and wisdom for a life of peace, contentment, and ease?

Enduring Understandings with Unit Goals

EU 1: Societal structure has the power to promote or limit freedom, choice, and desire.

- Analyze the role memory and oral storytelling plays in societal change and cultural continuity.
- Critique the societal structure in “Examination Day” by Henry Slesar.

EU 2: In the attempt to protect people from making poor choices, the utopian vision quickly turns into a dystopian nightmare.

- Compare and contrast utopian and dystopian ideals and societies.
- Create a visual representation supported by relevant textual evidence that demonstrates how the author develops the characters and communicated theme in the novel.

EU 3: Through a process of listening and exchange, collaboration with peers provides a variety of perspectives that develop critical-thinking and analytical skills.

- Collaborate with peers to set essential groundwork for productive discussion of meaningful topics.
- Contribute to discussions by providing unique inferences supported by relevant textual evidence.
- Present claims and analysis in a focused, coherent manner with sound, valid reasoning.

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

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- **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.
- **RL.8.7:** Analyze the extent to which a filmed or live production of a story or drama stays faithful to or departs from the text or script, evaluating the choices made by the director or actors.
- **RL.8.9:** Analyze how a modern work of fiction draws on themes, patterns of events, or character types from myths, traditional stories, or religious works such as the Bible, including describing how the material is rendered new.
- **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)
- **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.8.9:** 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.

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- **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.8.2:** Analyze the purpose of information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and evaluate the motives (e.g., social, commercial, political) behind its presentation.
- **SL.8.3:** Delineate a speaker’s argument and specific claims, evaluating the soundness of the reasoning and relevance and sufficiency of the evidence and identifying when irrelevant evidence is introduced.
- **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 Literature**
 - **Key Terms:** theme, character, plot, setting, effect, support, conclusion, text structure, key details, suggest, narrator, point of view, impact, inference, author’s message, author’s purpose, author’s point of view, dramatic irony, suspense, humor, tone, analogies,
 - **Vocabulary:** individualism, collectivism, utopia, dystopia, science fiction, conformity, isolation, individuality, ignorance, palpable, unison, apprehensive, ritual, vital, adherence,

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aptitude, unsettling, conviction, regulated, chastisement, serene, vividly, murky, emblem, relinquish

Interdisciplinary Connection:

- Social Studies: forms of government, governments as utopias, cultural and collective memory

Daily Learning Objectives with *TWPS*

Students will be able to...

- Analyze how characters respond to key events and what that reveals about the characters.
 - *What was the last test you took? How did you feel while taking it?*
- Build essential background knowledge about utopias and dystopias.
 - *Why are rules important in a society? Describe five “rules” that you live by.*
- Analyze a theme’s relationship to the characters, setting, and plot. **
 - *Does striving for a utopia lead to progress, or does it create unrealistic expectations that cause more harm?*
 - *Is a true Utopian society possible, or will human nature always prevent it?*
- Investigate the text for evidence that supports the conclusions provided for chapter four of *The Giver*.
 - *What is more important to this community: the well-being of an individual or the group?*
- Analyze how setting impacts character development.
 - *How are people shaped by their environment?*
- Critique the society in *The Giver* in small group discussions.
 - *What guidelines make a small group discussion successful?*
- Compare and contrast how multiple characters are shaped by the setting in which they live and the events they experience.
 - *What role does love play in the creation of families in this community?*
- Analyze how dialogue and incidents in a story propel the action and reveal aspects of a character.
 - *In what ways does Jonas begin to experience loneliness in chapter 9?*
- Compare and contrast how the author uses imagery.
 - *What is imagery and why do authors use imagery?*
- Assess evidence to determine if it supports inferences about chapter 18 of *The Giver*.
 - *How are Jonas’s interpersonal relationships changing?*
- Infer the meaning of “release” and analyze text evidence that supports this inference.
 - *Based on everything you have read; what do you think “release” is and what evidence supports that inference?*
- Engage effectively in short discussions using text evidence and Accountable Talk. **
 - *Why does the community consider the Receiver of Memory both necessary and honorable?*
 - *Compare and contrast what Jonas learns from the memories he receives in chapters 18 and 19.*

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- Develop a clear claim and select relevant supporting evidence about Jonas' character development .
 - *Does the ending of The Giver feel more hopeful or tragic? Support your answer with ideas from the text.*
- Draw conclusions about characters and events based on textual evidence.
 - *At what point does Jonas begin to truly change as a person – and what causes that change?*
- Identify the theme of the novel supported with key details and relevant evidence.
 - *Is it better for a community to have “sameness” and stability, or individuality and freedom?*
- Write a multi-paragraph argumentative response about character development and how it is connected to theme supporting it with multiple pieces of evidence.*
 - *Does Jonas's change make him stronger or more isolated? Explain.*
 - *Which of your selected quotes shows the strongest example of Jonas's character change? Why?*
- Revise and edit their writing by improving clarity, organization, and grammar through self-editing and teacher feedback..
 - *How does Jonas's final decision reveal the author's message about what makes life meaningful?*

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:

- Verbal: Prompting, questioning, elaborating, facilitating higher level thinking skills
- Explicit modeling
- Guided and independent practice
- Small group instruction

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- Strategic grouping
- Key Vocabulary
- Graphic organizers
- KWL charts
- Venn diagrams
- Sequence writing
- Reinforcing contextual definition
- Providing correct pronunciation by repeating student's response
- Predicting and inferring
- Directed reading-thinking activities (DR-TA)
- Glossaries
- Chunking of Text
- Sentence starters
- Word banks

Assessments

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENTS:

- Do Nows
- 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
- Independent reading projects (EU 4)
- In-Class work
- Verbal Check-Ins
- Vocabulary Checks
- Collaborative group work
- Daily TWPS Question
- Socratic Seminar Discussion
- Brief Writes
- Visual One Pager Template

SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENTS:

- Quiz 1 (EU 1 and 2)
- Quiz 2 (EU 1 and 2)
- Unit 3 Unit Test: *The Giver* One Pager

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Unit Task

Unit Task Name: Character Development & Theme Analysis: Jonas' Journey

Description:

In this task, students will write a multi-paragraph **argumentative response** in which they determine how Jonas **changes** throughout the story and explain how this character change connects to the overall **theme** of the novel.

Prior to writing, students will create a **one-pager** that visually represents Jonas's character development, key moments from the text, and the theme, which will serve as a planning tool for their written response.

In their written response, students will:

- Clearly state a **claim** about how Jonas changes
- Support the claim with **strong, relevant evidence**
- Explain how Jonas changes from the **beginning to the end** of the story
- Identify a clear **theme** and explain how Jonas's development reveals it
- Use specific **events, details, dialogue, or imagery** from the text

Evaluation: Teacher Created Scoring Scoring Guide

Unit Resources

- "Examination Day" by Henry Slesar
- *The Giver* Pre-Reading Stations
- *The Giver* by Lois Lowry
- *The Giver* Movie
- "The Giver Audio Book" available at
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZQq79KFowEA&t=16474s>
- Laptops
- Socratic Seminar
- SBAC Prep Online
- IAB Resources Online
- Brief Writes
- Pear Assessment