

Unit 3: What's in a Story

4th Grade ELA

45 Class Meetings

Revised June 2026

Essential Questions

- How do the characters, settings, and events work together to tell a story?
- What lessons or messages do stories often teach us?

Enduring Understandings with Unit Goals

EU 1: A story is made up of key elements such as characters, setting, plot, conflict, and theme that work together to convey meaning.

- Identify and describe the key elements of a story, including characters, setting, plot, conflict, and theme.
- Analyze how characters, setting, and events interact and influence the overall story.
- Explain how authors use literary devices and structural elements (e.g., dialogue, description, sequence) to develop the story.

EU 2: Authors make intentional choices about structure, language, and style to engage readers and communicate their ideas.

- Compare and contrast stories by looking at their themes, characters, or structure to identify similarities and differences.
- Analyze how an author's choices reflect the story's theme or central message.
- Explain how authors use techniques like flashbacks, foreshadowing, or descriptive detail to enhance the reader's experience.

EU 3: Readers use evidence from the text to analyze and interpret stories, deepening their understanding of characters, events, and themes.

- Determine the theme or central message of a story and support their understanding with evidence from the text.
- Discuss and write about stories with clear reasoning, using specific examples and evidence from the text.
- Cite evidence from the text to explain how key story elements work together to convey meaning.

Unit 3: What's in a Story

4th Grade ELA

45 Class Meetings

Revised June 2026

Standards

Common Core State Standards:

- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4.1:** Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4.2:** Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text; summarize the text.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4.3:** Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4.4:** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including those that allude to significant characters found in mythology (e.g., Herculean).
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4.5:** Explain major differences between poems, drama, and prose, and refer to the structural elements of poems (e.g., verse, rhythm, meter) and drama (e.g., casts of characters, settings, descriptions, dialogue, stage directions) when writing or speaking about a text.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4.10:** By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poetry, in the grades 4-5 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.1:** Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.2:** Determine the main idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize the text.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.4:** Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words or phrases in a text relevant to a *grade 4 topic or subject area*.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.9:** Integrate information from two texts on the same topic in order to write or speak about the subject knowledgeably.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.2:** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.2.a:** Introduce a topic clearly and group related information in paragraphs and sections; include formatting (e.g., headings), illustrations, and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.2.b:** Develop the topic with facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples related to the topic.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.2.c:** Link ideas within categories of information using words and phrases (e.g., *another, for example, also, because*).
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.2.d:** Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.2.e:** Provide a concluding statement or section related to the information or explanation presented.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.4:** Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience

Unit 3: What's in a Story

4th Grade ELA

45 Class Meetings

Revised June 2026

- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.5:** With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.6:** With some guidance and support from adults, use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing as well as to interact and collaborate with others; demonstrate sufficient command of keyboarding skills to type a minimum of one page in a single sitting.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.7:** Conduct short research projects that build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.8:** Recall relevant information from experiences or gather relevant information from print and digital sources; take notes and categorize information and provide a list of sources.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.9:** Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.4.1:** Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on *grade 4 topics and texts*, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.4.1.a:** Come to discussions prepared, having read or studied required material; explicitly draw on that preparation and other information known about the topic to explore ideas under discussion.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.4.1.b:** Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions and carry out assigned roles.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.4.1.c:** Pose and respond to specific questions to clarify or follow up on information and make comments that contribute to the discussion and link to the remarks of others.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.4.1.d:** Review the key ideas expressed and explain their own ideas and understanding in light of the discussion.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.4.2:** Paraphrase portions of a text read aloud, or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.4.3:** Identify the reasons and evidence a speaker provides to support particular points.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.4.4:** Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience in an organized manner, using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes; speak clearly at an understandable pace.

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 3: What's in a Story

4th Grade ELA

45 Class Meetings

Revised June 2026

Unit Content Overview

1. Elements of a Story

- Analyze characters' thoughts, actions, and dialogue to understand their motivations and how they contribute to the story.
- Make inferences about characters, settings, and events based on clues in the text and explain their reasoning.
- Recognize different types of conflict (e.g., character vs. character, character vs. nature, character vs. self) and explain their role in driving the story forward.
- Compare and contrast how different stories use characters, settings, plots, and themes to convey similar or different meanings.

2. Story Structure

- Identify how authors use specific structures (e.g., chapters, paragraphs, dialogue) to organize and develop their stories.
- Examine how authors choose words, phrases, and literary devices (e.g., imagery, figurative language, repetition) to create mood, tone, and meaning.
- Explain how authors use techniques like flashbacks, foreshadowing, or descriptive detail to enhance the reader's experience.
- Analyze how an author's choices reflect the story's theme or central message.

3. Text as Evidence

- Use text evidence to explain how an author's language and structural choices influence the reader's understanding and engagement.
- Compare different authors' styles or approaches to similar themes, identifying how their choices affect the story's impact.
- Describe how key events in a story are connected and explain their significance using text evidence.
- Determine the theme or central message of a story and support their interpretation with specific examples from the text.
- Identify and cite relevant text evidence to support their responses to questions about characters, events, and themes.

Vocabulary and Key Terms: character, setting, plot, conflict, resolution, theme, climax, exposition, rising action, falling action, dialogue, narrator, point of view, imagery, mood, tone, foreshadowing, flashback, main idea, summary, evidence, inference, compare, contrast, author, genre, protagonist, antagonist, sequence, event

Interdisciplinary Connection:

- Humanities

Unit 3: What's in a Story

4th Grade ELA

45 Class Meetings

Revised June 2026

Daily Learning Objectives with TWPS

Students will be able to...

- Students will identify and define the key elements of a story, including characters, setting, plot, conflict, and theme. ****
 - *What are the most important parts of a story?*
 - *Why do you think they are important?*
 - *How do the characters, settings, and events work together to create a story?*
 - *Why do you think stories are often divided into beginning, middle, and end?*
- Students will analyze characters' traits, motivations, and actions using text evidence. ****
 - *How do the actions or choices of a character affect what happens in a story?*
 - *Why is it important to understand a character's feelings or motivations?*
 - *Can you think of a story where a character changes? What causes the change?*
- Students will describe how characters contribute to the plot and interact with others in the story.
 - *Can you find examples of imagery, repetition, or other devices in Jack's poems?*
 - *How do these devices contribute to the mood or meaning of his poems?*
 - *Why do you think poets use similes in their writing?*
- Students will describe the setting of a story and explain how it influences characters and events.
 - *How does the setting help make the story more interesting or believable?*
 - *What would happen if the story took place in a different time or place?*
- Students will identify and explain the stages of a story's plot, including exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution.
 - *Why do most stories include a problem or conflict?*
 - *How does the way a problem is solved help teach us about the story's message?*
 - *What do you think makes a story exciting or suspenseful?*
- Students will identify the main conflict in a story and explain how it drives the plot.
 - *Have you ever faced a problem like the one in the story? How did you solve it?*
 - *Why do you think authors use conflict in stories to help readers understand real-life problems?*
 - *How can understanding a character's conflict help us understand them better?*
- Students will describe how the resolution addresses the conflict, using text evidence.
 - *How does the main character feel about the conflict they face? Does their reaction change over time?*
 - *Do the other characters in the story help or make the conflict worse? How?*
 - *How does the conflict drive the plot forward? What would happen if the conflict was resolved right away?*
 - *How does the conflict affect the overall theme or lesson of the story?*
- Students will identify the theme or central message of a story.
 - *How can you figure out the lesson or theme of a story?*
 - *Why do you think authors include themes in their stories?*
 - *Can a story have more than one theme? Why or why not?*

Unit 3: What's in a Story

4th Grade ELA

45 Class Meetings

Revised June 2026

- Students will make inferences about characters or events based on text clues and prior knowledge.
 - *What are some reasons poets might choose to write in this form?*
 - *How can poetry be used to tell stories or share personal experiences?*
- Students will compare and contrast two stories, focusing on characters, settings, and themes.
 - *How do an author's words or descriptions make a story fun to read?*
 - *What happens if a story leaves out one of the important elements, like the setting or the conflict?*
 - *How does the way a story is written (e.g., dialogue, description) help readers imagine what's happening?*
- Students will write a short response to a text-dependent question, clearly stating their answer and supporting it with multiple pieces of evidence.
 - *What does it mean to find evidence in a text? Can you give an example of evidence you've found in the story?*
 - *How do you know when something is strong evidence to support your ideas about a story?*
 - *Why is it important to use evidence from the text when answering questions or discussing a story?*

Unit 3: What's in a Story

4th Grade ELA

45 Class Meetings

Revised June 2026

Instructional Strategies/Differentiated Instruction

- Whole group instruction
- Paragraph frames and sentence starters
- Teacher modeling
- Think-write-pair-share and small-group discussions
- Graphic organizers
- Accountable talk
- Homework
- Word walls with visuals (Venn Diagrams)
- Small group instruction
- Visual exemplars with teacher and student critiques
- Text and video chunking
- Spiraling back to guiding questions
- Multiple CFUs
- Close reading with text-dependent questions

EL Differentiation Strategies

- Word Banks and Word Walls with visuals
- TWPS (Think, write, pair, share)
- Pre-reading strategies
- Culturally responsive teaching
- Explicit teacher modeling
- Key vocabulary
- Graphic organizers
- Strategic Grouping
- Non-verbal assessments

Unit 3: What's in a Story

4th Grade ELA

45 Class Meetings

Revised June 2026

Assessments

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENTS:

- Do Now
- Academic Discourse
- Exit Slips
- Accountable Talk Discussions
- Completed notes
- Completed graphic organizers
- Homework
- Performance Task -- “Explode the Moment” Narrative Writing
 - Teacher’s rubric/scoring guide

SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENTS:

- Quiz: Elements of a Story, Story Structure, Text as Evidence (EU1, EU2, and EU3)
- IAB
- Unit Task: “Explode the Moment” Narrative Writing (EU1, EU2 and EU3)

Unit Task

Unit Task Name: “Explode the Moment” Narrative Writing

Description: Upon completing the unit students will brainstorm, using a graphic organizer, the outline of a story including all major components. The student will then choose one aspect of the story and focus on writing well crafted paragraphs that “explode the moment” that has been chosen. For example, a student may choose to write three paragraphs detailing a character, climax, or setting. The paragraphs should highlight strong elements and structure of a story.

Evaluation: Teacher’s Scoring Guide

Unit Resources

- Google Classroom
- CommonLit Stories
- ReadWorks Stories
- Google Slides (Teacher’s)
- Student Journals
- Chromebooks
- Graphic Organizers
- Vocabulary Wall