



INSTRUCTIONAL EXCELLENCE

# Unit Overview

**Grade 8: English/Language Arts**

**Unit 1: Exploring Voice**

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## Using This Resource




The Unit Overview provides all the standards and learning targets that should be taught over the course of the unit. It is designed to be used in conjunction with the Unit-at-a-Glance. Teachers should refer to the Overview to locate specific standards and their corresponding learning targets when designing lesson plans and assessments. \*While Text Suggestions are provided throughout the unit, they are intended as suggestions only. We recognize that elements of these texts are controversial; however, we intentionally left them in this unit for their educational value and the teaching moments they present. Individual teachers should use their discretion when selecting texts to meet their students' needs. The additional resources included in the Overview promote the most effective research-based teaching practices and should be considered when planning and assessing students.

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## Unit Overview

“Your writing voice is the deepest possible reflection of who you are. The job of your voice is not to seduce or flatter or make well-shaped sentences. In your voice, your readers should be able to hear the contents of your mind, your heart, your soul.”

— Meg Rosoff

The unifying theme for the first unit of Grade 8 is **Exploring Voice**. Building off the identities discovered in Unit 1 of Grade 7 and the expression exercised in Unit 4, the opening of Grade 8 allows for a more thorough exploration of the voices of those around us as well as our own growing voice. Although students have previously studied self, character and point of view, this unit is designed to expose students to the voices of a variety of fiction and nonfiction authors and to explore each writer’s unique style as well as to develop their own. This exploration requires action and analysis on the part of the students, both as readers and as writers.

Deeply embedded into this unit are the core SEL competencies: social awareness and self-awareness. Reading texts from a variety of fiction and nonfiction world voices delivers perspective to students and calls upon their exercise of empathy and respect for diversity. Writing of their own experiences through memoir establishes accurate self-perception and teaches students to recognize their emotions and unique strengths. Writing about their personal experiences builds self-confidence; successfully developing and exercising personal voice will lead to self-efficacy as well.

Repeatedly, this unit of study calls upon the Framework for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning, asking students to hone their learning and innovation skills through critical thinking about themselves and the characters they encounter (both fictional and autobiographical) and through collaboration with peers in a variety of tasks, including Socratic Seminars designed to enhance flexibility, adaptability, initiative, social skills and responsibility. This framework, which reflects the Common Core State Standards and learning targets, outlines a unit of study that is rich in rigor and creativity and caters to diverse learners. This unit is also designed to incorporate language standards, ensuring grade-level-appropriate writing and editing from each student.

The exploration in this unit hinges on the use of complex texts that are rich in language and experience. Students can then delve deep into the worlds illustrated by each author, focusing on diction and literary techniques that combine to create character, tone and mood and that come together to establish voice. Students’ exposure to multiple voices will allow them to begin to differentiate what goes into making each voice strong in any given text. Teachers may vary texts as necessary to suit the needs of their individual classrooms so long as students are exposed to a variety of authors with unique styles and complex, dynamic characters.

This unit begins with the study of voice in nonfiction. *Knots in My Yo-Yo String* by Jerry Spinelli and *A Long Way Home, A Memoir* by Saroo Brierley are the two suggested texts that this resource will develop, but teacher discretion should be used to suit student needs. Examining voice in nonfiction works will center around language, style and diction, but will expand to discuss purpose as well as provide an opportunity for students to analyze the specific choices and effects of an author’s purposeful use of language.

Following a comprehensive study of voice in nonfiction, students will begin to explore the same concepts in fiction works. One anchor text best suited to this is *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte as it is rich in language and character and both the character and the author possess a clear, identifiable, soaring voice with multiple passages appropriate for analysis and close reading. *Go Ask Alice* and continued work with *The House on Mango Street* vignettes from Grade 7 are wonderful options to scaffold for students who need simpler, shorter texts. Teachers can also pull excerpts from many suggested texts as long as students analyze how dialogue contributes to character, how character is revealed, and how language is studied with regards to mood and tone.

Understanding why authors write memoirs and exploring the many voices presented throughout the unit will equip students with the necessary tools to write their own memoirs at the conclusion of the unit. Beginning with SMITH magazine/NPR's concept of the Six-Word Memoir, students will work to express their essence in the form of a fully developed narrative memoir. Taking this narrative through the writing process will allow students the opportunity to reflect on their personal experiences and emotions and to form, exercise and reflect on their very own written voice. The exploration of voice in this unit allows students the opportunity to travel through the written word, understand the voices of those they meet along the way and add their own fresh, unique style to the world.

### **Essential Questions:**

- In what ways do dialogue, thoughts, actions, and experiences expose and create character?
- How do various literary techniques create tone/mood?
- How do authors vary narrative elements to serve their purpose?
- How can we effectively establish and exercise our voice?

# Standards and Learning Targets

## Reading Literature (RL)

Code	Standard	Learning Targets
RL.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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Select and apply appropriate before-reading strategies interacting with a text, e.g., previewing the text, setting a purpose for reading, making predictions about the text, and drawing connections between prior knowledge or experience and the text.</li> <li>● Select and apply during-reading strategies to monitor comprehension, e.g., rereading, paraphrasing, summarizing, connecting related ideas within a text, verifying or modifying predictions, visualizing, and connecting text ideas with prior knowledge or experience.</li> <li>● Demonstrate comprehension of a text with after-reading strategies by:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Explaining the main ideas.</li> <li>▶ Identifying what is directly stated in the text.</li> <li>▶ Drawing inferences.</li> <li>▶ Drawing conclusions.</li> <li>▶ Verifying or adjusting predictions.</li> <li>▶ Making new predictions.</li> <li>▶ Paraphrasing and summarizing.</li> <li>▶ Making connections between the text and oneself.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Among multiple pieces of evidence, determine, select and state the piece of evidence that confirms the meaning of a literary text.</li> <li>● Among multiple pieces of evidence, identify the strongest piece of evidence that suggests logically what might be true about characters, setting, plot, etc.</li> <li>● Distinguish between connotations and denotations of words for understanding.</li> <li>● Participate actively and appropriately in discussions about literary texts.</li> <li>● Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.</li> <li>● Use appropriate general academic or domain-specific words when discussing or writing about literature.</li> </ul>

Code	Standard	Learning Targets
<b>RL.3</b>	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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Examine what a character in a story or drama thinks, says or does.</li> <li>● Connect how a character’s speech, thoughts, or action cause movement within the plot or drama.</li> <li>● Show how a character’s speech or thoughts reflect the traits the character displays.</li> <li>● Use precise words and descriptive details to convey events.</li> <li>● Use evidence from a literary text to support analysis.</li> <li>● Present claims emphasizing the most important points, supported by pertinent descriptions and details.</li> <li>● Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.</li> <li>● Use appropriate general academic or domain-specific words correctly when writing about or discussing literature.</li> </ul>
<b>RL.4</b>	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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Use evidence from a literary text to support analysis of word choice.</li> <li>● Interpret analogies and literary allusions as a way to construct meaning in a literary text.</li> <li>● Use context as a clue to the meaning of words and phrases.</li> <li>● Use common, grade-appropriate Greek or Latin affixes and roots as clues to the meaning of a word (e.g., precede, recede, secede).</li> <li>● Verify an inferred meaning of a word or phrase in a dictionary.</li> <li>● Examine the effects of diction, tone, figurative language, sound elements and connotation as a way to construct meaning.</li> </ul>
<b>RL.6</b>	Analyze how the 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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Demonstrate knowledge of mood.</li> <li>● Compare and/or contrast one’s own views to those of a character or characters.</li> <li>● Explain how shared or opposing points of view between a reader and character can generate a specific mood.</li> <li>● Analyze inferences drawn from a literary text.</li> </ul>

Code	Standard	Learning Targets
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Use dialogue to develop characters.</li> <li>● Use vocabulary knowledge when considering words and phrases important to comprehension.</li> </ul>
<b>RL.9</b>	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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Demonstrate the behaviors of a strategic reader to a given literary text.</li> <li>● Demonstrate an understanding of universality.</li> <li>● Compare the literary elements of a modern fiction text to those of a traditional fiction text.</li> <li>● Examine characters, plots, and themes to determine the connections between and the evolution of these elements from the traditional to the modern texts.</li> <li>● Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.</li> <li>● Use evidence from literary texts to support analysis and reflection.</li> <li>● Present findings using relevant evidence and well-chosen detail.</li> <li>● Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.</li> <li>● Use appropriate general academic or domain-specific words when discussing or writing about literature.</li> </ul>

## Reading Informational Text (RI)

Code	Standard	Learning Targets
<b>RI.1</b>	Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Select and apply appropriate before-reading strategies to a text, e.g., previewing the text, setting a purpose for reading, making predictions about the text, and drawing connections between prior knowledge or experience and the text.</li> <li>● Select and apply during-reading strategies to monitor comprehension, e.g., rereading, paraphrasing, summarizing, connecting related ideas within a text, verifying or modifying predictions, visualizing, and connecting text ideas with prior knowledge or experience.</li> <li>● Demonstrate comprehension of a text with after-reading strategies by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Explaining the central ideas.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



Code	Standard	Learning Targets
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Identifying what is directly stated in the text.</li> <li>▶ Drawing inferences.</li> <li>▶ Drawing conclusions.</li> <li>▶ Verifying or adjusting predictions.</li> <li>▶ Making new predictions.</li> <li>▶ Paraphrasing and summarizing.</li> <li>▶ Making connections between the text and oneself.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Determine and state multiple pieces of evidence that confirm the meaning of an informational text.</li> <li>● Identify multiple pieces of evidence to suggest logically what might be true about an author’s purpose, opinion, important ideas, etc.</li> <li>● Distinguish between connotations and denotations of words for understanding.</li> <li>● Participate actively and appropriately in discussions about informational texts.</li> </ul>
<b>RI.3</b>	Analyze how a text makes connections among and distinctions between individuals, ideas, or events (e.g., through comparisons, analogies or categories).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Determine the purpose of an individual, event or idea within an informational text.</li> <li>● Determine the relationships between or among individuals, events or ideas within a text.</li> <li>● Draw conclusions about the relationships among individuals, events or ideas within a text.</li> <li>● Examine the effect created by the relationships between or among individuals, events or ideas within a text.</li> <li>● Apply knowledge of organizational patterns by identification of strategies such as definition, classification, comparison/contrast, and cause/effect.</li> <li>● Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.</li> <li>● Use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases to show comprehension.</li> </ul>
<b>RI.4</b>	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,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Use evidence from an informational text to determine the effect of analogy and allusion to other texts on meaning of the text.</li> <li>● Use context as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.</li> </ul>

Code	Standard	Learning Targets
	including analogies or allusions to other texts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Use common, grade-appropriate Greek or Latin affixes and roots as clues to the meaning of a word (e.g., precede, recede, secede).</li> <li>● Determine the meaning of figures of speech in context.</li> <li>● Determine the suggested meaning of connotations of words that address the same technical meaning.</li> <li>● Examine word choice, relationships between words, and references to other texts as an aid to comprehension and a clue to tone.</li> <li>● Gather vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension.</li> </ul>
<b>RI.5</b>	Analyze in detail the structure of a specific paragraph in a text, including the role of particular sentences in developing and refining a key concept.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Determine the development of an identified paragraph, e.g., main idea and supporting details, cause and effect, examples, description.</li> <li>● Determine the author’s purpose for the identified paragraph.</li> <li>● Determine the relationship among certain sentences within the paragraph.</li> <li>● Draw conclusions about how the relationship among the sentences adds to the growth of an idea within the paragraph.</li> <li>● Evaluate the effectiveness of the structure in presenting the information.</li> <li>● Use evidence from an informational text to support analysis of paragraph structure.</li> <li>● Use grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words when explaining the roles of sentences within the paragraph.</li> </ul>

## Writing (W)

Code	Standard	Learning Targets
<b>W.2</b>	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● See W.2.a, W.2.b, W.2.d, W.2.e, W.2.f, below.</li> </ul>
<b>W.2.a</b>	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 aid comprehension.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Adapt planning and prewriting to address the demands of an informative text, including:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Refining the focus of a topic.</li> <li>▶ Gathering information on a specific topic.</li> <li>▶ Examining information to determine the ideas and concepts.</li> <li>▶ Effectively organizing information within an established structure.</li> <li>▶ Including appropriate text features to aid understanding.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Compose a draft of an introduction that presents a thesis clearly and establishes the important concepts and ideas.</li> </ul>
<b>W.2.b</b>	Develop the topic with relevant, well-chosen facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Compose a draft of the body with attention to:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Effective organization of information.</li> <li>▶ Recognition of inappropriate shifts in pronoun number and person.</li> <li>▶ Subject-verb and pronoun antecedent agreement.</li> <li>▶ Formation of complete sentences.</li> <li>▶ Frequently confused words.</li> <li>▶ Recognition of variations from standard English, and use of strategies to improve expression in conventional language.</li> <li>▶ Placement and function of phrases and clauses in sentences.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Choose language that expresses ideas precisely and concisely, recognizing and eliminating wordiness and redundancy.</li> </ul>

Code	Standard	Learning Targets
<b>W.2.c</b>	Use appropriate and varied transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Use transitions purposefully to promote unity and comprehension.</li> </ul>
<b>W.2.d</b>	Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic. (SC.7)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 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.</li> </ul>
<b>W.2.e</b>	Establish and maintain a formal style.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Distinguish those elements that create formal from informal style.</li> <li>● Use specific words or phrases that support a consistent formal style.</li> <li>● Vary sentence patterns for meaning, reader/listener interest and style.</li> <li>● Maintain consistency in style and tone.</li> </ul>
<b>W.2.f</b>	Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Compose a draft conclusion that <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ integrates key components of the explanation, and</li> <li>▶ provides reinforcement for the explanation of a topic.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Apply the revision and editing stages of the writing process to the writing piece, focusing on the audience and the purpose. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Revise to choose words and phrases for effect and to convey ideas precisely.</li> <li>▶ Edit for correction of vague pronouns, punctuation of nonrestrictive/parenthetical elements, correction of misplaced and dangling modifiers, correct spelling, and punctuation to show a pause or omission.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Prepare the final product for presentation and/or publication.</li> </ul>
<b>W.3</b>	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● See W.3.a, W.3.b, W.3.c, W.3.d, W.3.e below.</li> </ul>

Code	Standard	Learning Targets
<b>W.3.a</b>	Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and point of view and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally and logically.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Adapt the prewriting stage of the writing process to a narrative piece, e.g.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Focus on an experience or event.</li> <li>▶ Begin development of a character or characters and conflict.</li> <li>▶ Outline a plot.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Compose a draft of an introduction that <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ reveals the character or characters and the conflict, and</li> <li>▶ establishes the beginning of a plausible plot development.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Establish the role of the narrator, contrasting it to the roles of (and the effects of those roles on) other characters.</li> </ul>
<b>W.3.b</b>	Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, and reflection to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Compose a draft of the body of a narrative that considers the role of a plausible set of characters and events.</li> <li>● Apply knowledge of elements of characterization and plot development and their effects upon pacing and full development of characters.</li> <li>● Compose with attention to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Subject-verb and pronoun-antecedent agreement.</li> <li>▶ Choosing words and phrases for effect and to convey ideas precisely.</li> <li>▶ Formation of complete sentences,</li> <li>▶ Varying sentence patterns for meaning, reader/listener interest and style.</li> <li>▶ Maintaining consistency in style and tone.</li> <li>▶ Choosing language that expresses ideas precisely and concisely, recognizing and eliminating wordiness and redundancy.</li> <li>▶ Using verbs in active and passive voices and conditional and subjunctive moods for effect.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>W.3.c</b>	Use a variety of transition words, phrases, and clauses to convey sequence, signal shifts from one time frame or setting to another, and show the relationships among experiences and events.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Use transition words purposefully to promote unity within the narrative and to promote comprehension.</li> <li>● Analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning.</li> <li>● Use accurately grade-appropriate general academic words.</li> <li>● Use words or phrases important to comprehension.</li> </ul>

Code	Standard	Learning Targets
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Choose language that expresses ideas precisely and concisely.</li> </ul>
<b>W.3.d</b>	Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to capture the actions and convey experiences and events.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Use figures of speech.</li> </ul>
<b>W.3.e</b>	Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on the narrated experiences or events.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Compose a draft of a conclusion that considers the events in the narrative draws the events together, and clarifies them.</li> <li>● Apply the revision and editing stages of the writing process to the narrative. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Revise for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– choosing words and phrases for effect and to convey ideas precisely, and</li> <li>– varying sentence patterns for meaning, reader/listener interest and style.</li> </ul> </li> <li>▶ Edit for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– frequently confused words;</li> <li>– formation of verbs in indicative, imperative, interrogative, conditional and subjunctive moods;</li> <li>– punctuation of nonrestrictive/parenthetical elements;</li> <li>– punctuation used for effect; and</li> <li>– correction of shifts in verb voice and mood.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>● Prepare the final product for presentation and/or publication.</li> </ul>
<b>W.4</b>	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1-3 above.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● See W.1, W.2, W.3 and W.7 of Framework for specific application.</li> </ul>

Code	Standard	Learning Targets
<b>W.5</b>	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. (Editing for conventions should demonstrate command of Language standards 1-3.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● See W.1, W.2, W.3 and W.7 of Framework for specific application.</li> </ul>
<b>W.9</b>	Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Write in response to grade-level print, nonprint, and digital literary or informational text(s).</li> </ul>
<b>W.10</b>	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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Adjust the writing process as necessary for different grade-appropriate writing tasks, purposes and audiences.</li> <li>● Set and adjust personal goals and conference regularly with adults and peers to identify and address writing deficiencies.</li> </ul>

## Speaking and Listening (SL)

Code	Standard	Learning Targets
<b>SL.1</b>	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 ideas clearly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● See SL.1.a and SL.1.c below.</li> </ul>
<b>SL.1.a</b>	Come to discussions prepared, having read or researched the material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence on the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Demonstrate the behaviors of an effective student by completing and reflecting on assigned reading.</li> <li>● Cite textual evidence that most strongly supports analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.</li> </ul>

Code	Standard	Learning Targets
	topic, text or issue, to probe and reflect on ideas under discussion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Take purposeful notes in preparation for discussion, using highlighting, outlines, journals and other techniques as appropriate.</li> <li>● Identify the main ideas under discussion, and apply higher-order questions that yield a deeper analysis of those ideas.</li> <li>● Conduct focused research as necessary to prepare for discussions.</li> <li>● Access prior knowledge to extend the topic under discussion.</li> </ul>
<b>SL.1.c</b>	Pose questions that elicit connections and the ideas of several speakers, and respond to others' questions and comments with relevant evidence, observations and ideas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.</li> <li>● Select and apply levels of questions to elicit elaboration and exploration of a variety of ideas and information.</li> <li>● Demonstrate collegiality when asking and responding to questions and comments.</li> <li>● Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.</li> </ul>
<b>SL.1.d</b>	Acknowledge new information expressed by others and, when warranted, qualify or justify students' own views in light of the evidence presented.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Attend to the contributions of others by paraphrasing or summarizing new evidence.</li> <li>● Examine and modify their opinions when credible evidence demands, explaining how new evidence effected the change.</li> </ul>
<b>SL.3</b>	Delineate a speaker's argument and specific claims, evaluating the soundness of the reasoning and the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence and identifying when irrelevant evidence is introduced.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Apply critical listening strategies to determine the speaker's argument and claims.</li> <li>● 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.</li> <li>● 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.</li> <li>● Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is sound and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; recognize when irrelevant evidence is introduced.</li> <li>● Align specific claims to their supporting reasons to identify gaps in support.</li> </ul>



Code	Standard	Learning Targets
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify evidence that is irrelevant to the claim(s), and explain the effect of that evidence on the argument.</li> <li>Identify and explain errors in reasoning and their effect on the argument.</li> </ul>
<b>SL.4</b>	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 volumes and clear pronunciation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adopt the behaviors of effective speakers as appropriate to task, purpose and audience.</li> <li>Justify the inclusion of evidence and details that most effectively present claims and emphasize important points.</li> <li>Verify and explain the reasoning used to select and organize evidence and details.</li> </ul>
<b>SL.6</b>	Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Demonstrate control of spoken language by adjusting speech to varying contexts and tasks.</li> </ul>

## Language (L)

Code	Standard	Learning Targets
<b>L.1</b>	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>See L.1.a and L.1.b below.</li> </ul>
<b>L.1.a</b>	Explain the function of verbals (gerunds, participles, infinitives) in general and their function in particular sentences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Apply an understanding of the formation and function of verbals and verbal phrases.</li> <li>Use precise words, relevant descriptive details and sensory language to convey experiences.</li> <li>Analyze the use of verbals and verbal phrases in professional, peer and students' own writing.</li> </ul>
<b>L.1.b</b>	Form and use verbs in the active and passive voices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Apply an understanding of the difference in formation and function of active and passive voice verbs.</li> <li>Use precise words to capture action when writing.</li> <li>Use verbs in the active and passive voices to achieve particular effects.</li> </ul>

Code	Standard	Learning Targets
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analyze the effect of active and passive voice verbs in professional, peer, and students' own writing.</li> </ul>
<b>L.1.c</b>	Form and use verbs in the indicative, imperative, interrogative, conditional and subjunctive moods.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Apply an understanding of the formation and function of verbs in various moods.</li> <li>Apply an understanding of the relationship between the mood of a verb and the purpose of a sentence.</li> <li>Use verbs in the conditional and subjunctive moods to achieve particular effects.</li> <li>Analyze the effect of verb mood on meaning in professional, peer and students' own writing.</li> <li>Strengthen writing by editing for correct mood of verbs.</li> </ul>
<b>L.1.d</b>	Recognize and correct inappropriate shifts in verb voice and mood.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Apply an understanding of how an inappropriate use of verb voice and mood affects meaning.</li> <li>Analyze the effect of verb voice and mood on meaning in professional, peer, and students' own writing.</li> <li>Strengthen writing by editing to correct inappropriate shifts in verb voice and mood.</li> </ul>
<b>L.2</b>	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation and spelling when writing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>See L.2.a and L.2.b below.</li> </ul>
<b>L.2.a</b>	Use punctuation (comma, ellipsis, dash) to indicate a pause or break.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Apply an understanding of the choices and functions among punctuation to show a pause.</li> <li>Determine from context the purpose for a pause or break in speech or writing.</li> <li>Analyze professional, peer and students' own writing to determine the effect of punctuation upon meaning.</li> <li>Strengthen writing by editing for correct punctuation to indicate a pause or break.</li> </ul>
<b>L.2.b</b>	Use an ellipsis to indicate an omission.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Apply an understanding of punctuation to show an omission.</li> <li>Analyze professional, peer and students' own writing to determine the effect of punctuation upon meaning.</li> <li>Strengthen writing by editing for correct punctuation to indicate an omission.</li> </ul>

Code	Standard	Learning Targets
<b>L.3</b>	Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading or listening.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● See L.3.a below.</li> </ul>
<b>L.3.a</b>	Use verbs in the active and passive voices and in the conditional and subjunctive moods to achieve particular effects (e.g., emphasizing the actor or the action; expressing uncertainty or describing a state contrary to fact).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Apply an understanding of voice and mood of verbs to affect the meaning of speech or writing.</li> <li>● Strengthen speech or writing by revising to achieve particular effects. (See CCSS 8 W5.)</li> <li>● Analyze professional, peer, and students' own writing or speech to determine the effect of voice and mood of verbs upon meaning.</li> </ul>
<b>L.4</b>	Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on Grade 8 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Apply an understanding of the various types of context clues to determine word or phrase meaning.</li> <li>● Apply an understanding of inference and drawing conclusions to determine word or phrase meaning.</li> </ul>
<b>L.5</b>	Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships and nuances in word meanings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● See L.5.a and L.5.c below.</li> </ul>
<b>L.5.a</b>	Interpret figures of speech (e.g., verbal irony, puns) in context.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Apply knowledge of figurative language, including verbal irony and puns, to a critical reading of a text.</li> <li>● Use sensory language to capture the action and convey experiences and events.</li> <li>● Determine the meaning of words and phrases, including figurative language, as they are used in a text.</li> <li>● Analyze professional, peer and students' own writing to determine how figurative language contributes to meaning.</li> </ul>
<b>L.5.c</b>	Distinguish among the connotations (associations) of words with similar denotations (definitions) (e.g., bullheaded, willful, firm, persistent, resolute).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Apply an understanding of connotation to judge word choice.</li> <li>● Use precise words to capture the action and convey experiences and events.</li> <li>● Analyze professional, peer and students' own writing to determine how word choice contributes to meaning.</li> </ul>

Code	Standard	Learning Targets
L.6	Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases; garner vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Apply skills identified in CCSS 7 L.4.a, L.4.b, L.4.c, L.4.d and L.5.a, L.5.b, L.5.c to increase vocabulary and differentiate between word choices in order to improve writing and speaking.</li> </ul>

## Unit Assessments and Rubrics

### Pre-Assessments and Formative Assessments

- Beginning-of-Year Pre-Assessments (Selected Response and Writing Sample in response to short story)
- Passage Close Reading Annotation (Focus Connotation, Figurative Language and Imagery/Sensory Details)
- Character Portrait
- Paragraph Annotation
- Grammar Exercises
- “This I believe” Writing
- Memoir
- ML #1: Language-Meaning Chart
- ML #2: Memoir Organizer
- Week 7: *Jane Eyre* Tone Activity
- Week 7: Poetry Tone Jigsaw
- Peer Editing Checklist 1
- Peer Editing Checklist 2

### Summative Assessments

- Character Written Analysis and Rubric
- ML #1: Style Analysis Rubric
- Socratic Seminar
- Paragraph Analysis: An Author’s Purpose Rubric
- Memoir Rubric

# Vocabulary

High-frequency “Tier 2” words and academic vocabulary should be taught explicitly as students need to understand and apply these words across all content areas in various situations. For more information on how to teach vocabulary while using standards, visit the following websites:

- [www.edutopia.org/blog/teaching-ccss-critical-vocabulary-marilee-sprenger](http://www.edutopia.org/blog/teaching-ccss-critical-vocabulary-marilee-sprenger)
- [www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/sept09/vol67/num01/Six-Steps-to-Better-Vocabulary-Instruction.aspx](http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/sept09/vol67/num01/Six-Steps-to-Better-Vocabulary-Instruction.aspx)
- [achievethecore.org/aligned/including-tier-2-vocabulary-instruction-in-curricular-materials/](http://achievethecore.org/aligned/including-tier-2-vocabulary-instruction-in-curricular-materials/)

## ***Theme-Specific***

- Explore
- Voice
- Authentic
- Mood
- Point of view
- Perspective
- Self-reflection

## ***Writing***

- Process
  - ▶ Prewriting
  - ▶ Drafting
  - ▶ Revising
  - ▶ Editing
  - ▶ Publishing
- Thesis
- Evidence
- Quote
- Paraphrase
- Transition
- Synthesis
- Personal narrative
- Memoir
- Purpose
- Style
- 6 traits of writing
  - ▶ Ideas and development
  - ▶ Organization
  - ▶ Voice
  - ▶ Word choice
  - ▶ Sentence fluency
  - ▶ Conventions

### ***Language***

- Denotation
- Connotation
- Figurative language
- Hyperbole
- Alliteration
- Imagery/sensory details
- Personification
- Simile
- Metaphor
- Diction
- Analogy
- Allusion
- Active and passive voice
- Moods of verbs (indicative, imperative, interrogative, conditional, subjunctive)
- Verbals (gerunds, participles, infinitives)
- Precise language
- Punctuation that indicates a pause or break (comma, ellipsis, dash)
- Ellipsis to indicate an omission

### ***Reading***

- Close reading
- Annotation
- Context clues
- Inferences
- Tone
- Theme
- Characterization
- Dialogue
- Incident
- Action
- Setting
- Mood

# Text Suggestions

The following texts have been chosen for their Lexile levels, interest levels and ease for planning to multiple standards. To find an up-to-date list of vetted texts — which clearly center diversity, equity and inclusion — visit our list of [Culturally Responsive Text Suggestions](#).

See *Appendix A: Text Complexity Considerations* for information on how to select complex text. The Lexile range used for measuring text based on the Common Core band for 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grades is 925L-1185L.

## **Theme-Related Fiction**

*Adam of the Road* by Elizabeth Janet Gray (1030L)  
*The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* by Mark Twain (970L)  
*Annie John* by Jamaica Kincaid (1220L)  
*Catherine, Called Birdy* by Karen Cushman (1170L)  
*Down to the Last Out* by Walter Dean Myers (920L)  
*Go Ask Alice* by anonymous (930L)  
*The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros (870L) \*Use selected, age-appropriate vignettes  
*Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte (890L)  
*My Life as a Book* by Janet Tashjian (880L)  
*Oliver Twist* by Charles Dickens (990L)  
*The Pearl* by John Steinbeck (1010L)  
*Pedro's Journal* by Pam Conrad (1030L)  
*Return to Sender* by Julia Alvarez (890L)  
*The Secret Life of Bees* by Sue Monk Kidd  
*A Single Shard* by Linda Sue Park (920L)  
*A Time to Dance* by Padma Venkatraman (720L)  
*The Wednesday Wars* by Gary Schmidt (990L)

## **Theme-Related Nonfiction**

*Abraham Lincoln* by George Sullivan (700L)  
*An American Childhood* by Annie Dillard  
*The Closer: Young Readers Edition* by Mariano Rivera  
*Knots in My Yo-Yo String* by Jerry Spinelli (980L)  
*A Long Way Home, A Memoir* by Saroo Brierley (1090L)  
*Louisa May's Battle* by Kathleen Krull (1040L)  
*My Life in Dog Years* by Gary Paulsen (1150L)  
*Steve Jobs* by Joshua Gregory (1050L)  
*The Story of My Life* by Helen Keller (1090L)

### **Theme-Related Short Stories**

“Fish Sticks” by Amy Tan

“Flowers for Algernon” by Daniel Keys

“Hearts and Hands” by O. Henry

“The Lottery” by Shirley Jackson “Mother and Daughter” by Gary Soto

“The Somebody” by Danny Santiago

“Thank You Ma’am” by Langston Hughes

“The War of the Wall” by Toni Cade Bambara

“The White Umbrella” by Gish Jen

## **Educator Websites**

(Websites change frequently. Check sites ahead of time for content and accuracy.)

- [www.achievethecore.org](http://www.achievethecore.org) Provides resources for teaching the Common Core State Standards.
- [www.ixl.com/ela/grade-8](http://www.ixl.com/ela/grade-8) Offers a wide variety of links to mini-lessons on conventions, sentence structure and language.
- [thecornerstoneforteachers.com/2014/08/close-reading.html](http://thecornerstoneforteachers.com/2014/08/close-reading.html) Offers strategies for close reading.
- [www.readwritethink.org](http://www.readwritethink.org) Hosted by the National Council for Teachers of English, contains various lessons and resources for reading and writing.
- [www.npr.org/2008/02/07/18768430/six-word-memoirs-life-stories-distilled](http://www.npr.org/2008/02/07/18768430/six-word-memoirs-life-stories-distilled) Contains links to Six-Word Memoirs.
- [www.scholastic.com/teachers/articles/teaching-content/grades-6-8-mentor-memoirs/](http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/articles/teaching-content/grades-6-8-mentor-memoirs/) Contains suggestions for teaching memoirs to middle school students.
- [thisibelieve.org/](http://thisibelieve.org/) Features essays as memoir model texts.
- [www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/150/kids-as-adults?act=3](http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/150/kids-as-adults?act=3) Contains audio of a story to use as a memoir mentor text.
- [www.shmoop.com/literature/](http://www.shmoop.com/literature/) This is a fun resource to share literature with students in a lighthearted, easy-to-digest manner.
- [www.theteacherscorner.net/teacher-resources/websites.php](http://www.theteacherscorner.net/teacher-resources/websites.php) Provides lesson plans and links including printable handouts.
- [grammar.quickanddirtytips.com/grammar-girl](http://grammar.quickanddirtytips.com/grammar-girl) Contains grammar mini lessons and tips.
- [owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/1/](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/1/) This is an online writing lab full of tips and assignments.
- [tetw.org/Memoir](http://tetw.org/Memoir) Contains links to contemporary essays and memoirs.
- [teachabletexts.com/tag/memoir/](http://teachabletexts.com/tag/memoir/) More resources for reading and teaching memoirs.
- [teacher.scholastic.com/writeit/memoir/teacher/](http://teacher.scholastic.com/writeit/memoir/teacher/) Has a guide to teaching memoirs.
- [www.middleweb.com/25642/how-to-teach-memoir-in-the-middle-grades/](http://www.middleweb.com/25642/how-to-teach-memoir-in-the-middle-grades/) This is a great resource for teaching memoirs to middle school students.



- [www.newsela.com](http://www.newsela.com) Contains comprehensive links to informational texts and paired readings by category and grade/lexile level.
- [www.achievethecore.org/file/2020](http://www.achievethecore.org/file/2020) This is a comprehensive resource for teaching *Knots in My Yo-Yo String*.

## Lesson Sequence — Unit Progression

**The Unit Progression gives weekly examples of how to teach to the unit-specific learning targets over the course of nine weeks. Teachers should adjust the pace as needed for their individual classes.**

Launching the unit will introduce students to the concept of voice, transitioning their traditional idea (from music, etc.) into the literary realm. Activities, discussions, course readings and written work will revolve around what goes into establishing one’s voice and how authors, students included, use voice toward a specific purpose in their writing. Students will be pre-assessed, listen to music, read short stories and passages, and complete a “This I believe” writing assignment to begin the exploration of their unique voice and the voices of others.

Weeks 2 and 3 bring the introduction of nonfiction memoirs and the study of voices in nonfiction. In addition to the analysis of language, character, tone and mood, students will begin to recognize the purpose of the writing in regards to individual paragraphs and entire pieces. After reading, students will compose a well-structured paragraph analyzing an essential paragraph in a nonfiction work. Students will work to develop thesis statements that reveal the essence of the writing, analyzing each sentence’s importance in conveying the author’s specific purpose.

After reviewing and studying voice in nonfiction, Grade 8 students will begin to explore voice in fiction, analyzing language and voice in Week 4. Students will conduct a variety of before-, during- and after-reading strategies aimed at literary analysis. Students will be challenged to examine the language of a text and to note the style and diction used to create voice. Weeks 5 and 6 delve into voice in fiction as it pertains to characterization. A main focus will be annotation and close reading to determine how authors use language to reveal character and how characters present themselves through their thoughts, dialogue and action. The decisions characters make and the development they experience will be carefully considered as students examine what the text says about the characters explicitly and implicitly. The culmination of these weeks will be a written character analysis.

The study of voice in fiction will extend to the creation of tone and mood in Week 7. Students will examine setting, diction, figurative language and connotation to determine the mood of a work or passage. Students will begin to understand the written tone of something and how it affects the result in a work similarly to that of the tone of voice of a speaker or singer. Analyzing the tone or mood of a passage will allow students to see the direct correlation between language and effect, and they will be given an opportunity to explain this result in a brief constructed response at the end of Week 7.

Once the completion of the study of voices of others in fiction and nonfiction is complete, Week 8 and Week 9 see students turn inward to hone the development of their own voice. As a culmination of the study of voice, students will compose a memoir by reflecting on personal experience and selecting an aspect of their lives that conveys them as a complex character, creates a clear tone and has a specific purpose. Students should be encouraged to be

courageous and open in these pieces and to strive to experiment with writing styles to determine their truest voice. Students will write independently and work with the teacher and a writing partner to take their memoir through the writing process.

It is important to note that these are suggested time frames and that teachers can and should differentiate the length of assignments based on the needs of individual students while still keeping to the learning targets. Additionally, by Grade 8 a portion of reading and written tasks can be completed as homework.

## Appendix A: Text Complexity Considerations

When selecting books, text complexity matters. According to the Common Core State Standards Initiative, three factors should be considered when the teacher is choosing texts: 1) Qualitative Measures, 2) Quantitative Measures, and 3) Reader and Task Considerations. For more information on these measures, see the following website: [www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/standard-10-range-quality-complexity/measuring-text-complexity-three-factors/](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/standard-10-range-quality-complexity/measuring-text-complexity-three-factors/).

As a result of research conducted in 2013 on text complexity, updated information was added to Appendix A of the CCSS to reflect the new expectations required of students in order to meet College and Career Readiness (CCR) by high school graduation. The table below shows the six different measures found reliable for measuring text complexity and their corresponding grade levels.

Common Core Band	ATOS (Accelerated Reader)	Degrees of Reading Power®	Flesch-Kincaid	The Lexile Framework®	Reading Maturity	Text Evaluator
2nd-3rd	2.75 – 5.14	42 – 54	1.98 – 5.34	420 – 820	3.53 – 6.13	100 – 590
4th-5th	4.97 – 7.03	52 – 60	4.51 – 7.73	740 – 1010	5.42 – 7.92	405 – 720
6th-8th	7.00 – 9.98	57 – 67	6.51 – 10.34	925 – 1185	7.04 – 9.57	550 – 940
9th-10th	9.67 – 12.01	62 – 72	8.32 – 12.12	1050 – 1335	8.41 – 10.81	750 – 1125
11th-CCR	11.20 – 14.10	67 – 74	10.34 – 14.20	1185 – 1385	9.57 – 12.00	890 – 1360

Table 1: Updated Text Complexity Grade Bands and Associated Ranges From Multiple Measures, taken from [www.corestandards.org/wp-content/uploads/Appendix-A-New-Research-on-Text-Complexity-revised.pdf](http://www.corestandards.org/wp-content/uploads/Appendix-A-New-Research-on-Text-Complexity-revised.pdf), which can be found on the website [www.corestandards.org/other-resources/](http://www.corestandards.org/other-resources/).

# Appendix B: Instructional Strategies for Diverse Learners

When choosing instructional strategies, teachers should consider the multiple learning styles, backgrounds and abilities of all students. Research shows that to promote ELA/literacy skills, teachers should incorporate a mix of whole-group, peer-paired and independent activities into instructional procedures. Below is a list of research-based strategies recommended to promote literacy skills in the five essential areas of reading (comprehension, vocabulary, fluency, phonics and phonemic awareness).

## Comprehension Strategies

- KWL Charts, Venn Diagrams, T-charts, etc.
- Interactive Read-Alouds, Think-Alouds, etc.
- Story Boards, Sketch to Stretch, etc.
- Question-Answer-Relationship (QAR) (e.g., [www.youtube.com/watch?v=wsud7AQWva8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wsud7AQWva8))
- Focus Questions

## Comprehension Strategies with Cooperative Learning (Collaboration)

- Guided Reading, Literature Circles, Book Talks, etc.
- Readers Theater, Role Play, Reciprocal Reading, etc.
- Shared/Buddy/Paired Reading
- Think-Pair-Share, Turn-and-Talk, etc.
- Jigsaw (e.g., [www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/nov18/vol76/num03/Let's-Get-Jigsaw-Right.aspx](http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/nov18/vol76/num03/Let's-Get-Jigsaw-Right.aspx))
- Socratic Seminar (grade 2: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=zBfH\\_fhAme0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zBfH_fhAme0); for older students: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=69Qv3l0nuNg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=69Qv3l0nuNg))
- Fishbowl
- Four Corners (e.g., [www.youtube.com/watch?v=M2XmJQ9FL5A](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M2XmJQ9FL5A))
- Gallery Walk (e.g., [www.youtube.com/watch?v=nNT3PZP2obU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nNT3PZP2obU))

## Vocabulary Strategies

- Word Walls
- Word Analysis, Word Sorts (e.g., Making Words), Word Games (e.g., UpWords, BINGO)
- Word Ladders
- Concept Mapping (great for ELL students/differentiation), Concept Circles, Frayer Model, etc.

- Alpha Boxes (e.g., [www.youtube.com/watch?v=iBGB7CiN0bQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iBGB7CiN0bQ))
- List-Group-Label (e.g., [www.youtube.com/watch?v=K731qicwYcY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K731qicwYcY))
- Non-Linguistic Strategies (visuals)
- Analogies, Connect-Two, etc.

## **Fluency Strategies**

- Daily Read-Alouds, Think-Alouds, etc.
- Record Self/Listen to Self
- Listen to Stories Using Technology
- Repeated Readings
- Choral Reading

## **Phonemic Awareness/Phonics Strategies**

- Making Words
- Word Ladders
- Centers/Literacy Stations
- Guided Reading
- Interactive Writing

