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Intertextual Connections in Text Sets: Creating Common Core Curriculum for Middle School Readers

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INTERTEXTUAL CONNECTIONS IN TEXT SETS:
CREATING COMMON CORE CURRICULUM FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL READERS

by Karissa Finley

A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Teaching.

Hamline University
Saint Paul, Minnesota
August 2015

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Overview

In this information age, the vast quantity of knowledge and data available is almost crushing. The global citizens who will run the world when my two year old son is grown need to know how to listen through the shouts of a billion electronic voices. They will need to learn to choose, balance and integrate a multiplicity of texts in order to make decisions and make sense of their world. How well are today’s teachers preparing them to do so?

The hopeful answer is: better than before. The new Common Core State Standards in English have a special emphasis on Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, requiring students to read multiple texts and make meaningful connections between them (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010, p.10). This appears to be one of the shifts in focus from older standard sets, and is thus is a relevant curriculum design challenge to me and other teachers in my context. In this study I will explore the question: How can I design a curriculum unit that uses a text set to teach middle school English students to integrate knowledge and ideas as indicated by the Common Core State Standards?

Learning Standards

Teaching English is a holistic and all-encompassing task. When I first began teaching middle school English in California, my first solo teaching job, I remember
being overwhelmed by the task of deciphering and internalizing the multitudes of standards in order to plan curriculum. Hired the week before school began, setting up my first classroom, I was faced with planning how to teach reading, composition, speaking, listening, literature, and grammar, all in 53 minutes per day. This was in addition to the teaching challenge of every middle school teacher: reaching young adolescents who have “bigger” things on their minds, like friends and romance and fitting in and trying on a new face, a new self, every week. Beyond the English field, I also felt a responsibility to teach such things as citizenship, personal responsibility, time management, ethics, technology, collaboration and teamwork, and more.

Planning Curriculum in Context

As I continued as a beginning teacher, it seemed that planning curriculum could be as simple as following the sequence in the literature textbooks, which the textbook company had helpfully aligned with the state teaching standards. The district-supplied pacing guides, along with these anthologies and a limited number of class sets of novels owned by the school, were to make lesson planning straightforward and even standardized from school to school. I found in my experience many teachers who had been teaching the same lessons in the same way for many years.

Still, the pacing guides were not adopted entirely at my school site because a) they included too many standards to be taught well and in-depth, and b) my colleagues are independent-minded and wanted to retain autonomy in the order and depth in which they taught the material. This made sense to me since most of the deep and important skills in English are cyclical rather than sequential; standardized pacing is seen as important only when teachers are reaping commensurate benefits from collaboration.
Therefore, individual teachers were still shouldering responsibility for choosing and adapting materials. I learned from this school culture to be an inventive and thoughtful adaptor and selector of curriculum.

I often tell my students that when we understand more, the questions don’t disappear; we simply find more worthy questions. After ten years of experience teaching middle school English, it is now clear that to be a relevant teacher, lesson planning is a complex thinking process that requires constant revision, especially in the face of the diverse literacy and communication demands of twenty-first century society. It is also clear that curriculum needs to be something for which each individual teacher takes responsibility.

For me, curriculum planning involves trying to find an acceptable meeting place between the ideal world of research and the realities, demands and conventions of the district and site. This involves backward mapping from the state standards and the priority learning targets my colleagues and district have identified from them, and revising through the year based on the skills and needs my students bring to the table. It also involves an awareness of the shifting vision of the needs of my students for future success.

**The Move to the Common Core**

The recent adoption by California and many other states of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) has brought some of the country together in an initiative to detail what K-12 students should know in order to be ready for college and careers. Currently, standards are available only in English and math, though other content area teachers are responsible for “literacy” standards as well. The initiative has had its share of
controversy, especially in regard to proposed standardized testing. Even as politicians fight about the implementation, educators are busy pondering the merits and challenges of the standards. Whether at school behest or in personal affirmation, many educators are designing and modifying curriculum to be relevant to Common Core State Standards.

I have always enjoyed curriculum design, so I am inclined to take part in this movement. I found that some teachers have been through many versions of politically-driven educational trends through the years, which seems to have dampened enthusiasm about anything new. However, after analyzing the standards, I became encouraged and interested for several reasons:

1. Clear content area literacy standards, with support required from science and history teachers in teaching the habits of mind of literate thinkers. This may push us to develop common language to encourage students to support arguments with evidence, and to read difficult texts with close attention.

2. Focus points in the form of “anchor standards” that span all the grade levels and bring our attention to the big picture of what 21st century learners should be able to do. This helps make the lengthy standards seem more concentrated and manageable.

3. A potential for more authentic learning, with a stated focus on depth as well as breadth, on critical thinking and “wide, deep, and thoughtful engagement” with text (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010, p.3).

4. The intention of teacher autonomy: the standards “define what all students are expected to know and be able to do, not how teachers should teach” (National
Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2014a, para. 16). While the district may require alignment or coordination between teachers, I appreciate that the direction of the Common Core is that the teacher has the discretion to determine how the standards are best implemented.

5. Shifts in focus supporting twenty-first century reading and communication, such as intertextual thinking, as well as digital literacy and interpersonal communications.

This final shift leads to concern for curriculum based on a specific type of reading.

**Reading sets of text with new purpose.** In the context of our information age today, the reading standards are of particular importance. People now have to do enormous quantities of reading to take in the information that is available, so the importance of reading has not declined, though the strategies and genres of reading might have changed. When I attended the Writing Project Winter Conference at the University of California Irvine in December, 2012, Carol Jago spoke about how the CCSS focus on reading nonfiction does not mean that students need to read less literature – just that they need to read more in general. Jim Burke shared his experience with applying the CCSS in his high school classes, and opined that the greatest challenge may be determining what to read: which texts, of what complexity, in what order, for what reason, in what way, at what stage? He shared a curriculum unit in which students had to read a collection of texts on a topic, analyze and annotate them, and make a claim.
When I heard these expert teachers speak, I began to analyze my own practice, and find room for improvement in my teaching of a) nonfiction texts and b) groups of texts. In both of these areas, I needed to find, develop, or modify curriculum to build my students’ twenty-first century reading skills.

**My Context and Rationale**

Materials provided by my district had not yet been updated to match the new standards. Many of the new Common Core English standards are similar to the previous California State Standards, and the same materials may be used. However, my colleagues and I felt the need for more and better text sets and nonfiction reading choices. A footnote to the English Language Arts Common Core State Standards (2010) states, “At a curricular or instructional level, within and across grade levels, texts need to be selected around topics or themes that generate knowledge and allow students to study those topics or themes in depth” (p. 58). Related texts that appear in old literature anthologies may be minimally integrated, simply linked by topic or theme, as well as being dated and often low-level.

When providing supplementary texts in the past, I had not always been strategic in selecting the text level or the styles of writing, or providing student choice. For example, when reading Mildred Taylor’s 1976 classic, *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, I may have brought in a video about Ruby Bridges to teach about segregation and prejudice, or some photos of the historical event Little Rock Nine, presented to the students, top-down, as background information, without students being asked to make formal or deep connections between the texts. After seeing the potential for deeper connections, I wanted my students to do more thinking to determine differences or
resolve ambiguities between the texts, to truly hear the voices in conversation with each other through the writing. This required finding ways to be more strategic in selection and arrangement of texts and reading tasks.

Finding enough material for students to read is not a problem nowadays, thanks to the Internet and libraries; the challenge is arranging and supporting the reading of those texts in a way to provoke interest and deep thinking. No longer feeling tethered to random texts arranged haphazardly in the literature textbook, it still remains a challenge to design curriculum that will connect texts, both classic and contemporary, to sustain bigger ideas in meaningful ways.

The substantial time required for curriculum development may be balanced out by the potential audience of any unit, both within one district and beyond, shared online. Though it still takes time to evaluate and adapt another teacher’s work for specific context and school culture, any teacher serious about adapting to the Common Core standards will have to make time to find, develop or adapt curriculum.

**Significance**

The goal of this project is thus to design a curriculum unit using a text set to teach middle school English students to integrate ideas and form intertextual links as indicated by the Common Core State Standards. This target is based on the Common Core curriculum’s focus on students evaluating, integrating and comparing arguments and themes from multiple texts. In order to teach these skills, teachers need to prepare a “collection of conceptually related materials” (Crafton, 1991, p.189) including both print and non-print items for students to analyze. This project will not include implementing the unit, but rather organizing a unit with the standards in mind, assembling and
reviewing a set of texts to be used, and outlining lessons that might be used in conjunction with the texts. The unit will be immediately shared on the districts internal website so that other teachers may access it for use in planning for the following school year.

The creation of such a unit may therefore be significant for many teachers who will be able to use it within a single district and beyond. It will provide a solid model for them to create their own text set units. It will incorporate ideas and strategies that may be used school-wide by any department. Teachers building and implementing such units may provide students solid practice in the reading and thinking they will use as adults, in whatever the post-Information Age has to offer.

**Summary**

The Common Core State Standards offer inspiration for curriculum to be developed that prepares 21st century learners to read groups of texts purposefully and effectively. Such course materials are needed in my local context and beyond. This project aims to create a reading unit in which middle school students will need to integrate and evaluate a set of closely related texts. In the following chapter, literature on the Common Core State Standards, text sets, and intertextual thinking will provide a foundation for the creation of this unit.
CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Overview

Several fields of research are significant to the goal of this study: designing a text set-based curriculum unit to teach middle school English students to integrate knowledge and ideas. This literature review first presents an overview of the Common Core State Standards in the context of outcome-based educational trends. It examines the role of teacher as curriculum writer, within a context of materials being simultaneously plentiful and scarce. It also looks at literacy focus shifts, and how the standards and shifts relate to the ideas of intertextuality (relationships to the text) and the text set. There are instructional shifts, which require addressing the balance between informational and literary texts, building disciplinary knowledge, and building complexity. The literature selection in the first section is unusual in its inherent currency: the standards in question have been available for less than five years, and are just now being implemented in many places in the past three. Thus, empirical research studies are less available than theoretical commentaries and interpretive articles. However, these are sufficient for the purposes of this study.

Next, this chapter discusses relevant research on intertextual thinking, or inferring relationships between texts, in order to provide depth of understanding to the standards addressed. It discusses definitions of intertextuality, passive and strategic intertextual reading, and instructional methods for supporting intertextual thinking and writing. This
research has its base in the theories of constructivism, critical thinking, and reading comprehension, but the overwhelming breadth of such research theories forces this study to stay focused on the relevant thinking skills. Finally, this chapter provides information regarding text sets: definitions, connecting items, writing from multiple texts, selecting by complexity, organizing, and student choice in texts. This information directly instructs the creation of the literacy module that will be in the following chapter. Recently published professional development books, informative articles, and websites reflect interest in the use of text sets in the English classroom with Common Core standards, despite its nascent stage.

**Common Core State Standards**

**Context of the standards.** Educational standards in American Education are firmly entrenched, having been a norm since President Reagan’s *A Nation at Risk* (United States National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). The study found American education to be a hit-or-miss patchwork depending on teacher/student preference and textbook editors’ selection, and the levels of expectations and requirements steadily declining. Standards-based educational reform is based upon the idea that state policy can influence instructional practices, and that high, specific standards for students will bring recommended instructional techniques and curricula into the classroom (Swanson & Stevenson, 2002). In examining the 1983 study, the differences in expectations between then and now are obvious. As different forms of outcome based education sprang up in response to the study, performance and knowledge goals have been implemented to describe what high school graduates should know and be able to do; these standards then trickled down to each grade, all the way to kindergarten.
Through the years, the individual states have had mixed success with their various frameworks of standards. The federal government’s No Child Left Behind initiative (No Child Left Behind [NCLB], 2002) attached money to the requirement for standardized testing within each state, based on the state’s standards. Now, continued dissatisfaction with American students’ progress in comparison to that of their international competitors has led to this latest iteration. The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) were initiated by state education leaders and formed with the input of teachers, parents, and experts (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). They are intended to provide common and appropriate benchmarks for the learning of all students, regardless of location. Since the standards’ publication in 2010, 44 states have adopted the Common Core State Standards.

**Teachers as Curriculum Writers**

Although the CCSS are a springboard for political and theoretical controversy, drawing the ire of notable thinkers such as Stephen Krashen (2014), they are endorsed by many educational experts and are a current reality for much of the country. While there may be issues with equity in implementation and assessment, these are still “the most promising set of standards since *A Nation at Risk*” (Liebtag, 2013, p. 65).

In her evaluation of potential benefits and challenges with the standards, Liebtag (2013) notes the descriptions of 21st century learners and the role of technology, mostly absent from previous sets of standards. Other researchers (Rothman, 2011; Coleman & Pimentel, 2012) tout the deeper thinking levels required from students. The CCSS raises the reading level of student texts in an effort to stretch students toward college readiness, while using the phrase “college- and career- ready” to describe the learning goals for all
students (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief
State School Officers, 2014a).

The CCSS offer some clear benefits in usefulness to teachers. As Rothman (2011)
records in his history and analysis of the standards’ development, in addition to offering
consistency across geographical boundaries, the new standards were intended to be
“fewer, higher, clearer” (p. 27) than the standards previously used. This wording appeals
to the teachers overwhelmed by too many and too ambiguous standards in the past.

However, according to the CoreStandards website (2014), the standards are
explicitly “not curricula and do not mandate the use of any particular curriculum,”
leaving the selection of texts and strategies up to states, districts, or individual teachers
(National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State
School Officers, About the Standards, 2014a, para. 5). As framed by educational
researcher Grant Wiggins, CCSS are about “standards, not standardization” (quoted in
Reeves, 2011, p.15). The goals are designated, but pedagogical decisions are to be left to
schools and teachers. The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), in a 2012
resolution, supports teacher expertise in making instructional decisions and choosing
materials to engage students’ interest and understanding.

The promoters of the standards predict that aligning standards across the nation
will lead to a greater collaboration of resources for teachers and learners (Liebtag, 2013),
saving the states money on textbooks, assessments, etc. In this digital age, coordinating
standards with other states multiplies the amount of useful lessons online, the number of
peers a teacher can collaborate with on sites such as Edutopia, or student resources such
as flipped video lessons on Youtube.
Yet, anecdotal evidence suggests that potential sharing of resources can be both a blessing and a curse. Barnett and Fay (2013) found the plethora of resources being produced and disseminated online can actually be quite overwhelming. As with all the other data available in this information age, without “curating, vetting, and focusing the resources being developed in order to make them useful,” the explosive “proliferation” of materials as caused by the adoption of the standards by thousands of educators causes a glut of resources that can be seen as “a problem as much as a solution” (Barnett & Fay, 2013, p.30).

In California, as of June 2014, the state education webpage reported that educational frameworks (documents which provide guidance for implementing the CCSS) are still in progress (para. 3). In addition, the adoption and purchase of new textbooks and instructional materials was suspended from 2009-2015 due to both the standards change and the budgetary restrictions (para. 5). Therefore, districts and teachers are to use their own resources in choosing how best to teach the skills and bring students as close as possible to the learning goals. For my particular district, the intra-web page reported:

These curriculum maps were created for our Literature Series in 2005 and may continue to serve as a resource for you as you make instructional decisions about your ELA planning. As we transition to Common Core, think about creative ways to infuse the 4 Cs and the ELA Shifts into your daily practice and planning (SVUSD English Language Arts, 2013).

In other words, teachers are on our own as to how to implement the standards, for the time being.
The situation of plentiful resources, in combination with a lack of specifically provided or dictated materials, creates an opportunity for teachers to create and adapt resources appropriate for their specific context and share resources locally.

**New Standards: Integration of Ideas, Intertextuality and Text Sets**

Within the subject area of English Language Arts (ELA), some states had more changes than others. California already had a rigorous set of standards; in fact, according to a state-by-state report from the Fordham Institute in 2010, California’s ELA standards earned a grade of “A” and were judged to be “clearer, more thorough, and easier to read” than the CCSS (Carmichael, Martino, Porter-Magee, & Wilson, 2010, p. 58).

While individual sub-standards are available for each grade, the Anchor Standards for grades 6-12 apply to the range of grades. They are the end goal for the high school graduate, while the grade-specific standards show a specific leveled goal for the end of the year in that grade. The reading anchor standards for grades 6-12, as listed by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers (2010) on page 35, are as follows:

**Key Ideas and Details**

1. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

2. Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

3. Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.
Craft and Structure

4. Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

5. Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.

6. Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

8. Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.

9. Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

10. Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

One significant change is in the stated focus on thinking across texts. The term intertextuality refers to finding the connections between texts, “looking across texts and letting one text get you to think about others” (Santman, as cited in Strop & Carlson, 2010, p.22). While the words “text set” or “intertextuality” are not included in the
standards themselves, these concepts are suggested by the inclusion of the subset of reading standards entitled “Integration of Knowledge and Ideas,” standards seven through nine.

Examining specific grade-level standards for this domain provides examples of intertextual thinking. Eighth grade students are to practice judging dramatic performances of narratives, including films, and evaluating the benefits and limitations of different media choices. This makes it clear that multimedia text sets are intended. Students are to compare modern narratives to the stories’ traditional roots, and also compare texts that provide conflicting information or points of view. (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010, p.37-39). In order to accomplish these things, students will also cultivate proficiency in other related standards, develop intratextual analysis skills such as identifying central ideas and point of view, and build habits of mind such as citing textual evidence.

**Shifts in Instruction**

Teachers are being encouraged to discover changes in focus by reading the standards with the lens of what is being called “instructional shifts” (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2014c). These are concepts embedded in the standards, though they are not a separate named component of the official document. The authors of the Common Core provide these shifts as a way for teachers and publishers to find points of emphasis as they create materials and align instruction to the standards. David Coleman and Susan Pimentel (2012), co-authors of the CCSS, explain that the criteria, focusing on the needs of the 21st
century learner, also will help in “paring away” components that are now opposed to, or are not the focus points of, the new standards (p. 1).

The Common Core website lists three main instructional shifts within the English Language Arts area:

1. Regular practice with complex texts and their academic language
2. Reading, writing, and speaking grounded in evidence from texts, both literary and informational
3. Building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction. (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2014c, para. 3-12)

Some resources, such as the website EngageNY (2012), developed by New York educators working with other experts, including Common Core co-author David Coleman, break these three more complex goals down into six components:

- Balancing Informational and Literary Text
- Knowledge in the Disciplines
- Staircase of Complexity
- Text-based Answers
- Writing from Sources
- Academic Vocabulary

The two lists contain almost identical concepts, but both offer heavily “packed” language that needs explaining to educators. Different organizations emphasize these shifts to different degrees, and, appropriately, school districts and teachers will emphasize
those shifts that they see as the greatest change or challenge, and/or those that seem to promise the greatest improvement in instruction and learning.

Almost all of the shifts could be seen as correlating with the standards regarding Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, the skill of intertextual thinking and the use of a text set as an instructional tool. For this unit and this literature review, the focus will be on the first three of EngageNY’s list.

**Balancing informational and literary text.** This shift requires teachers to consider the importance of informational texts within the balance of what students read in a school day (Coleman & Pimentel, 2011). Informational and literary texts are two different genres, or types of communications, that are considered important for readers. Bennett-Armistead (2003) described informational text as that which can transmit “information about the natural or social world, typically from someone presumed to know that information to someone presumed not to…” (p. 16). On the other hand, literary text would include both classic and modern literature, with narrative elements such as characters, theme, plot, or dramatic or poetic structures.

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading framework lends its ratio of literary to informational texts recommended for students to become able readers. At grade four, the proportion is 50% / 50%; by middle school, students are expected to read 60% informational texts and 40% literary texts, and by high school, 70% / 30% (United States & American Institutes for Research, 2010, p.11). These numbers are to include the reading in all subject areas throughout the school day. The implication for English classes is not that they would stop teaching literature, (indeed, literature “is the core of the work of 6-12 ELA teachers “ (National Governors Association Center for Best
There is a separate set of standards breakdowns for informational reading versus literature reading, and informational reading in the secondary level mentions “literary nonfiction” specifically: essays, speeches, biographies, articles, etc. The CCSS’s document providing criteria for publishers recommends that “Most ELA programs and materials designed for them will need to increase substantially the amount of literary nonfiction they include” (Coleman & Pimentel, 2012, p. 6). Text sets are one way to incorporate informational reading as a natural accompaniment to the literature units that English classes already focus on. In other subject areas, text sets are one way to increase the total instructional time devoted to literacy.

One aspect not necessarily mentioned in the shift, but more in the standards, is the need for students to recognize connections between both types of readings. Rather than isolating nonfiction, expository reading to history class, and fictional narratives to English class, readers learn to draw connections when they encounter both genre within a coherent, related curriculum.

**Knowledge in the disciplines.** This second shift implies that students need to be surrounded by information to build their general knowledge about the world and about the content areas they study. In addition, it is made clear that this knowledge can be built through text, meaning students can ultimately learn to access the knowledge independently, rather than always through direct instruction.

While this is an adjuration for subject area teachers in secondary schools to be literacy teachers, students will also build their knowledge of the world through the reading done in English class. The temptation of “turning the English class into an ersatz
social studies class” or an “ersatz creative arts class” (Stotsky, 2012, p.72-74), a particular issue for text set creation, can be sidestepped while still supporting students’ growing knowledge of the world. Coleman and Pimentel’s (2012) recommendations for publishers include the examples that:

…in a narrative with a great deal of science, teachers and students should be required to follow and comprehend the scientific information as presented by the text. In a similar fashion, it is just as essential for teachers and students to follow the details of an argument and reasoning in literary nonfiction as it is for them to attend to issues of style (p.8).

Reading and knowledge are necessarily intertwined.

This shift would also include the need to build knowledge in the discipline of English: the world of words, images, books, authors, and literary thinking. Procedural and functional knowledge about texts and writing leads to new understandings for readers.

**Staircase of complexity.** This third shift in instruction implies a top-down challenge, that students must climb the “staircase” toward college level texts by stepping it up each year (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010, Appendix A). The CCSS do not challenge the fact that text level progression is necessarily slow in the primary grades while reading fluency is being established. However, once students are reading well, instructors are expected provide all of them – even struggling students – with challenging texts. Rather than decreasing the level of the text, teachers are instructed to “give the support needed to enable [struggling students] to read at a grade-appropriate level of complexity” (National

Studies show that the reading level of textbooks has been steadily declining over the years (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010, Appendix A). The recommended text difficulty of CCSS exemplar texts is higher than that of previous standards. The reason for this is that the college and career texts, which students need to be ready to read independently, are at a higher level than high schools were typically demanding under former standards (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010, Appendix A).

The CCSS offers advice (Appendix A) on evaluating texts’ complexity in order to select appropriate levels. The Standards suggest that text complexity has three parts. First, qualitative dimensions of text complexity, best evaluated by a careful reader, include facets such as purpose, structure, language use, and cultural, literary, or domain-specific knowledge demands. For example, a text with symbolic, figurative or ironic levels of meaning will be more difficult for a reader. A text that assumes outside knowledge, through allusions or subject-specific language, will also be more demanding. Second, quantitative dimensions can be evaluated by a computer, and generally incorporate word length and difficulty, sentence length and complexity, and sometimes the cohesion of the text. Finally, “Reader and Text Demands” refers to the motivation, knowledge and experience of the reader, and the purposes and complexity of the tasks assigned for the text. Only the particular teacher could evaluate this final component within the context of his/her class.
While any text chosen should support students in progressing toward reading increasingly complex texts, this does not preclude teachers assigning texts at diverse levels. Texts below the goal level can build toward the standard, and texts above can allow extension or advanced engagement with the content after reaching the standard (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2014).

A focus on intertextuality and text sets, as will be explained below, are a viable strategy for approaching the first three of EngageNY’s six instructional shifts (EngageNY, 2012, Table 1) as well as Reading Standards seven through nine.

**Intertextual Reading and Writing**

**Definitions.** Intertextuality is a term that has had slightly different meanings throughout the years. As noted by Armstrong and Newman (2011), intertextuality initially referred to the relationship between word, thought, and sound. Later it was used to refer to the link between the text, writer, and reader. A literary understanding of the term might just consider allusions and thematic retellings - which are included in the CCSS as a standard. A constructivist definition put forth by Lenski (1998), says that intertextuality is using “both prior mental models constructed during past reading events and expectations of future mental models [to] shape current processing of texts” (p.72). Her research shows the importance of the teacher offering many texts of many genres connected by a single thread, or intertextual instruction. Based on this instruction, students can increase background knowledge, connect texts, think critically and shape multiple perspectives on a topic.

According to Lehr (1991) and Wolf (1988, 1992) (as cited in Lenski, 2001), good readers make connections and relationships from what they are currently reading to
things they have previously read. The multiple reading experiences synthesize together to make a whole understanding that is greater than the understanding given by any single text. Wolf compared this with “local reading” – just reading within a single text – and showed that most teaching is done with local reading in mind, despite the research available (as cited in Lenski, 2001).

The task of reading and comprehending multiple texts is similar to that of comprehending one text. Britt and Sommer (2004) outlined some of the additional requirements of reading multiple texts together. Readers have to be aware of the overlap or links between different ideas in the texts. The publisher, the way one cites another, and even the typeface can give clues as to sources that will affect reliability.

**Passive and strategic intertextuality.** Intertextual links are made both automatically and strategically. Kurby, Britt and Magliano (2005) showed that readers make low-level intertextual connections naturally; at least by college, they found, most students can “integrate without instruction” (p. 359). Other studies, such as Britt and Sommer (2004) and Albrecht & O’Brien and Zwaan & Radvansky (as cited in Britt & Sommer, 2004) support this evaluation of passive activation of prior knowledge described as *resonance*. Resonance is based on connections in such features as time, space, protagonists, motivation, and other factors, and is stronger when texts are read in a closer timeframe to each other. Britt and Sommer (2004) did not find that this passive, automatic integration of multiple texts was done spontaneously in lower levels (high school) – or, sometimes, even in college students - without explicit instruction; it is a higher-level thinking habit that requires more practice in academic reading habits.
Teaching intertextual thinking and writing. Instruction and curriculum design are integral in encouraging readers to make these connections strategically. Britt and Sommer (2004) noted the difficulty presented by connecting texts that were not written to be a cohesive whole. Therefore, instructors need to teach students strategies to learn to become aware of connections and to integrate and synthesize texts.

One such instructional strategy, long supported by research and used by effective teachers, is that of student discussion for understanding text. Alvermann’s (2000) article addressing the issue of classroom talk being “dear or cheap” included interviews with middle school students who reflected on how much talking with each other helps them understand text. Students showed that they were motivated and gained confidence in classes where they explored reading through peer-led discussions. Alvermann (2000) also claimed that discussion actually restructures cognitive pathways. She reviewed a body of research that shows that discussion can cause cognitive conflict in students, which in turn leads to cognitive restructuring and growth. When students hear and respond to interpretations that are different from their own, they are led to examine their own understandings and either strengthen them with evidence or revise them.

Socratic Seminars are a popular specific form of student discussion in many schools:

“...a formal discussion, based on a text, in which the leader asks open-ended questions. Within the context of the discussion, students listen closely to the comments of others, thinking critically for themselves, and articulate their own thoughts and their responses to the thoughts of others. They learn to work cooperatively and to question intelligently and civilly.” (Israel, 2002, p.89)
This format ensures that the classroom talk, as Alvermann’s research discusses, is student-led, text-based, and open to finding new understandings.

Hartman, in his 1995 study of eight high school students, recorded think-alouds (readers pausing and verbalizing their internal monologue) as they read five related texts, having been given instructions to make connections. Different connections and ideas came forward throughout the time. He noted the way students zigzagged back and forth between the texts to eventually come up with a final meaning greater than the parts. Students revised meaning of previous texts, as they saw the “conversation” between the texts unfold.

Teacher-directed questioning is a significant instructional strategy, especially when it leads to student discussion of the texts. For instance, Lenski (2001), in asking how we can teach students to think intertextually, found that discussion based on certain questions is a great tool for helping students forge connections between texts. The third grade students observed were encouraged to integrate and connect by the teacher’s questioning strategy, Directed Reading-Connecting Activity, a strategy invented by Lenski in a 1999 study.

As to the quality of the connections, Lenski (2001) found a similar result to Hartman and Allison (1996) as she observed students making connections in their discussions: a wide variety of interpretations and connections came up, as long as the teacher was open to listening for it. Discussions emanated in divergent and interesting ways when students had the freedom to make connections between texts. Sometimes the teacher followed the train of thought of the students, and allowed tangents to eventually come back and inform the discussion; sometimes the teacher kept the students more on-
topic. Either way, students returned to the text in the end. Additionally, students were able to follow her example in the types of questions to ask, actively taking on roles as discussion leaders by the end of the series of discussion. Lenski’s (2001) observations concluded that sometimes the teacher needed to revise understanding as well; teachers do not always have all the answers or the only way of looking at the topic.

Britt and Sommer (2004) agreed with Hartman and Allison (1996) and Lenski (2001) in the importance of questions – especially macro-level questions – in the comprehension of multiple texts. Just as impactful was the act of summarization. In their study, students who either answered macro-level questions or wrote a macro-level summary of the first text before proceeding to the second were able to increase recall and connections between the texts. Since they compared this task with that of answering micro-level questions, which had a negative result for memory and integration, the results clearly show the importance of the reader stopping and mentally restructuring the information. Britt and Sommer (2004) recommended that for research papers or working with multiple texts, students would benefit from writing short summaries – such as on a notecard – before continuing.

One related and helpful way of looking at student reading, which incorporates close reading and “big picture” reading, is Mackey’s 1997 article entitled “Good-enough Reading” (p. 428). Mackey posits that students have to balance the need to reread in order to get accurate details, with the need for momentum (either for personal interest or to maintain overall coherence). Mackey’s conclusions are important for intertextual reading: Close reading - analytically examining and rereading the text, to “reflect on the meanings of individual words and sentences; the order in which sentences unfold; and the
development of ideas over the course of the text” (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers, 2011, p.7) is a tool, and is one emphasized by the Common Core Standards. Still, readers’ use of reading technique needs to match their purpose for reading. Within each text set, it will be important to coach students on how to determine how closely to read, and how or when to go back to reread and revise understanding, depending on the genre of the piece and their knowledge from prior texts. Once they have read closely to understand the text, readers will need to step away from the close reading and use other methods to synthesize the information.

Segev-Miller (2004) posited that effective instruction for discourse synthesis (p. 8) - or intertextual thinking – should use multiple strategies, such as mapping (making a graphical representation of the structure of the text and of the synthesis; metacognitive strategies such as assessing, planning, and revising; and also intertextual processing strategies, including conceptual (finding a main idea and applying it to other texts, or finding a common idea among all texts, categorizing, etc.), rhetorical (summarizing, synthesizing), and linguistic (looking at language patterns and repetition). Her study showed that explicit instruction had a significant effect for the college students in the study, but she also recommended applying the principles in lower grades.

Mateos and Solé (2009) observed many difficulties in their subjects’ attempts at synthesis: fifty percent of the competent readers/writers in their study failed to produce a written synthesis. They found that synthesis has been a task seldom assigned and with little instruction when it is given. In addition, they found that students often were asked to connect and to revise as an exercise rather than needing to think authentically in order to solve a problem through recursive thinking and the synthesis of the texts. They
recommended that synthesis tasks be assigned and taught at lower levels – requiring that students work in-depth with paired and conflicting texts, and with authentic tasks when possible.

A final integral component of instruction for intertextual thinking is the creation and organization of the text set.

**Text Sets**

**Definition of text and text set.** While the terminology may be somewhat new, the idea of a text set certainly is not. As far back as the 1930s, the U.S. National Council of Teachers of English described how educators might lead students to examine topics from multiple perspectives, using multiple texts (Hartman & Allison, 1996). Yet Hartman (1996) reviews evidence suggesting that most discussion in today’s classrooms is focused on and within a single text and a single lesson.

Text set is a more specific term that has been used for the last quarter-century; Crafton (1991) defined a text set as “collections of conceptually related materials” (p.189). The purpose of a text set, according to Nichols (2009) is to improve the capabilities of our students as they strive to understand content and think critically about it.

Regarding the definition of the word “text,” many might limit their thinking to print resources, books and textbooks, etc. However, the postmodernist view brings a wider interpretation to what makes a text (Lenski, 2001; Crafton, 1991; Cappiello & Dawes 2013; Hartman & Hartman 1993; Hartman & Allison; 1996). Texts can in fact include non-print communicators of meaning. As defined in Pearson’s introduction to Strop & Carlson (2010), “Text is any artifact with ‘semiotic potential,’ the capacity to
prompt us as readers to engage in constructing meaning in response to it” (p. x).

Anything symbolic – from dance to photography, architecture to film, can be used to construct meaning. In 2015, this includes digital texts: blogs, podcasts, tweets, websites, webcasts and live streaming video.

Several authors agree that having multiple modalities or genres is a desirable trait in a text set (Cappiello & Dawes, 2013; Nichols, 2009; Hartman & Allison, 1996; Strop & Carlson, 2010); this presents more opportunities for learning, and accesses the truly multimodal thinking experience of our world. Opitz (1998) was in the minority in disagreeing, claiming they should just be books. Strop and Carlson (2010) point out that “MTS [multimedia text sets] reflect the texts of today’s world” (p. 2) and even suggest that teachers strive for “balanced text selection.” In selecting anywhere from five to fifteen or twenty texts (Short, Harste and Burke, 1996; Hartman & Allison, 1996) for the text set, the teacher would try to incorporate all five semiotic systems discussed by Anstey and Bull: Linguistic, Visual, Auditory, Gestural, and Spatial (Strop & Carlson, 2010, p.10-11). Overall, the concept of a text set is a flexible definition, but in execution demands that teachers plan strategically the connections and instructional usages.

The connections between the items in the text set could be a common topic, concept or theme, or a genre or author (Opitz, 1998; Short, Harste & Burke, 1996). Each type of connection can enhance different instructional foci. For example, Lattimer (2003) makes a case for genre study within the Writer’s Workshop model. Students read samples of texts all with the same genre, while preparing to write their own version in that genre. Strop and Carlson (2010) use Luke and Freebody’s Four Resources Model to identify reader stances or roles that readers take on in developing and exercising literacy: Code
breaker, Meaning maker, Text user, and Text critic (p. 12). By focusing on a theme or an event as a centering point for a text set, multigenre text sets “facilitate and provide an environment for critically engaging in each of these roles” (p. 12). These roles encompass a broad range of reading and thinking skills, and as such the text sets “provide a rich context for critical thinking” (p. 29), not just surface-level reading.

**Writing from multiple texts.** Students write about text as a way to make meaning and to demonstrate their comprehension of texts. As noted in CCSS Anchor Standards 1-2, writing standards include requirements for students to “Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence” and to “Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content” (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). Texts provide the evidence for arguments and the information for explanatory texts. In general, the writing tasks would draw from more than one text. Students will need to read, understand the texts, and understand how they connect or conflict, in order to synthesize the information into summaries or explanations or arguments.

According to Spivey (as cited in Armstrong & Newman, 2011), the task of synthesizing information from different sources to compose a text is a hybrid of reading and writing. It involves processes of organizing, selecting, and connecting. Spivey lists examples of synthesis tasks such as arguments, reports, topical projects, critical essays, and reviews. She notes that synthesis is more complex than summarizing because it requires students to construct a new organizational pattern, different from that of the
original texts. Summarizing each individual text may be a useful building block toward synthesizing several texts and placing them in conversation with each other. As such, Mateos and Solé (2009) agree that students from all levels may find the task very demanding, because they lack experience selecting information and making connections. Segev-Miller, in her 2004 study of university students writing literature reviews, came to the conclusion by the end that “it would be appropriate to start the instruction of discourse synthesis tasks at an early age” (p. 26) based on the need for more experience with the thinking and structures.

Middle school aged students may also find it challenging. Lenski and Johns (1997) studied middle school writers spiraling, going back and forth between parts of the task, or just paraphrasing instead of integrating or synthesizing. This study determined that the students often did not write in a linear way as often expected by the instructor, and thus needed instruction in the decision-making required for synthesis.

**Selecting texts for text sets.** The CCSS dictates that text complexity for reading should be high. However, research says it should vary. Nichols (2009) states that text sets should “include a variety of genres, text types, levels, and media forms” (p. 34-35). Cappiello and Dawes (2013) explain that through multiple related readings, student confidence and ability will grow; students will find higher-level texts more accessible by the end of the unit. In addition, the task and environment can be matched to the complexity, with students reading simpler texts independently, and moving up the stepladder of instructional support to collaborative, guided, or modeled reading (Fisher & Frey, 2008).
The texts also need to be deep and engaging, “to have engaging, provocative content that is both meaningful and immediately accessible” (Strop & Carlson, 2010, p.10) in order to precipitate and sustain deep, analytical thinking.

**Organizing texts in text sets.** Since how texts are clustered can impact the links made by readers (International Reading Association [IRA] and National Council of Teachers of English [NCTE], as cited in Lenski, 1998) teachers can organize texts in order to help students make connections. Hartman and Allison (1996) suggest five possible ways to support students’ understanding of the relationships between texts, though they say there are “no set rules” (p. 112). These ways are shown in Table 1 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Style</th>
<th>Arrangement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>complementary</td>
<td>central theme or topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conflicting</td>
<td>central topic; alternate perspectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>controlling</td>
<td>one central authoritative text with supporting subsequent ones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dialogic</td>
<td>like books in a series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>synoptic</td>
<td>variations of a story, with different points of view, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comparison of texts and ideas is a teaching strategy that has been found to have one of the greatest impacts on student achievement (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock 2001). Marzano notes that our time is well spent as teachers when we guide students toward comparing (noting similarities and differences), classifying (grouping like things), and creating metaphors and analogies (identifying relationships and patterns) to organize thoughts about two or more elements. Looking at the text set models, complementary, conflicting and synoptic organizations all support this type of thinking.

Cappiello and Dawes (2013) provide their own analogical names and diagrams for their models of organizing text. A “duet” model is a pair to compare/contrast. A
“sunburst” has a controlling text with subordinate “rays” coming out from it. A “tree ring” model begins with a central text, then investigates the sources for the creation of the text – allowing readers to question sources and to compare/contrast information. A “solar system” model is similar to Hartman and Allison’s (1996) “Complementary” model – texts around a topic, theme or genre (p.118). Finally, a “mountain” model moves from a broad foundation to more and more specific research, giving students responsibility to explore or do their own research as they learn more and decide what they are interested in (Cappiello & Dawes, 2013). Within any of these models, some texts are useful to “scaffold” others (to support the reader’s understanding), some to “immerse” the reader (providing depth and breadth), some to “extend” (to challenge students).

Choice. Lehman, Roberts and Miller (2014) focus on instructional methods of close reading, including reading closely across texts, both narrative and informational. They advise both teacher-directed materials and student choice in creating the text sets for comparisons. Their method for deepening interpretations of students’ reading includes first choosing a lens to read through (characters, themes, settings, authors… this step would generally be done by the teacher when arranging the text set), looking for patterns (such as in word choice, text evidence, character traits, etc.), then stepping back to use the patterns and develop new understandings of the texts (Lehman, Roberts & Miller, 2014, p. 6-8).

Curriculum Design

Middle grades research and educational practices were summarized by a 1989 task force from the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development. They proposed eight concepts for effectively educating the middle level learner. Most of these were directed to
the school structure at large rather than specific instructional methods affecting curriculum. Therefore, they are more appropriately directed at school leaders rather than teachers. For example, they recommended dividing large schools into smaller communities, partnering with families and communities, and hiring and training teachers who are experts at teaching young adolescents. One recommendation that affects instruction is to “identify the most important principles and concepts within each discipline and concentrate their efforts on integrating the main ideas” (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1995, p.20). As teachers integrate ideas within and between subject areas, they prepare students with the intertextual thinking and writing skills that continue to grow in importance as students advance. Many changes were made since then in the structuring of middle schools. Jackson and Davis (2000) found these recommended changes have been mainly effective and appropriate, with the exception that the curriculum often needed to be made more rigorous.

The Association for Middle Level Education (previously the National Middle School Association) published a document called This We Believe: Keys to Educating Young Adolescents (2010) that contains 16 tenets they believe lead to successful schools for middle level learners. These tenets are organized into the domains of 1) Culture and Community; 2) Leadership and Organization; and 3) Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment. Within this last area, the domain of the teacher, relevant points are that students be engaged in learning that is active and purposeful, within a curriculum that is challenging, exploratory, integrative, and relevant. Teachers will also use multiple approaches to learning, and multiple varied ongoing assessments for learning (National Middle School Association, 2010).
According to Piaget’s theory of cognitive development (1952), middle school aged students are developing into the formal operational stage of cognition. This is defined by an increase in the ability to use logic, deduction, and abstract thought. Piaget also described how thinkers assimilate new information into existing schemas, or make accommodations on the old schema if it does not match the new information. The educational application of this would be activating prior knowledge when teaching a new subject, and helping students learn to use their reasoning skills with logical evidence and in planning tasks.

**Backward mapping.** The definition of “curriculum” is much debated among theorists, but a useful definition in this context is a "blueprint for learning that is derived from desired results – that is, content and performance standards" (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005, pp. 5-6). Curriculum is thus a road map that, having its mind set on what the learner will achieve, identifies what the teacher must do to ensure that this learning takes place.

Backward mapping for curriculum design (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005) means starting with the end in mind, and then planning how to reach that goal. The curriculum designer, then, would think even past the final exam, to what the student should be able to do long after they walk out the classroom door. In a recent blog series (2012) on Edutopia, McTighe and Wiggins revisited their backward mapping goals, and recommended that with the Common Core State Standards, teachers break them down into the following elements: 1) long-term transfer goals (what the student will be able to do independently in the real world); 2) overarching understandings (what successful learners will need to “get” in order to do so); 3) essential questions (deep questions to get
students to make meaning); and 4) recurring cornerstone tasks (big performance tasks, as relevant and authentic as possible). Thus, with these cornerstone tasks, the teacher is “teaching to the test” - but in a positive sense; the “test” is something valuable to teach toward, just as the coach prepares the athletes with the game firmly fixed in mind (Wiggins & McTighe, 2012, para. 8). This means that problem- and project-based learning, Socratic seminars, small group inquiries and independent studies will all have a greater place in a well-designed curriculum. Therefore, any unit should strive to create a performance task worthy of students’ time.

**Instruction with Text Sets**

Text sets emphasize a need for explicit reading instruction. Strop and Carlson (2010) note that because readers have different abilities in different genres/contexts, “teaching students how to read, deconstruct (take apart and analyze), and make intertextual connections across multimedia and multimodal contexts is not only valuable, it is necessary” (p.1). Teachers can focus on activating prior knowledge and offering specific open-ended reflection questions. Due to the challenges of the variety of text structures, middle school students will also benefit from such strategies as “graphic organizers, reading/viewing guides, and questioning strategies” in order to approach the text on all levels (p.28).

**Summary**

The CCSS are standards that are based in research, and are high goals to help teachers focus on 21st century skills for our students (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2014a). Teachers are needed not just to implement but to design the curriculum materials. Curriculum
designers find certain areas of focus based on the explicit standards as well as the described “shifts” in instructional focus. One key area is thinking through and across multiple texts. This encompasses three English Language Arts Secondary reading standards labeled by the CCSS as Integration of Knowledge and Ideas. Intertextual thinking may difficult to do and to teach, but is important to address at all stages of learning. A text set is a strategically designed and arranged selection of multiple genres of texts, used to help train students in intertextual thinking. Designing a curriculum unit using a text set to teach intertextual thinking will bring together these strands of research in a practical way. In addition, based on the “shifts,” this unit will aim to give students practice reading texts of appropriately challenging complexity, both fictional and informational, in order to build knowledge and to provide a basis for writing or speaking grounded in evidence from texts.

Chapter three will describe the methods used for the development of the text set and curriculum for an eighth grade English class, and chapter four will articulate the developed curriculum. Chapter five will reflect on the learnings, limitations, implications and future needs on the topic of designing a curriculum unit using a text set to teach middle school English students to integrate knowledge and ideas as indicated by the Common Core State Standards.
CHAPTER THREE

Methods

Overview

The goal of this project was to design a curriculum unit using a text set to teach eighth grade English students to integrate ideas and form intertextual links as indicated by the Common Core State Standards. This curriculum will help build skills and abilities in the areas of critical thinking and reading with purpose.

This chapter will examine methodology (population and setting) and the rationale for this type of project. Then it will explore curriculum design, both in my experience and in theory for English classes. It will present the steps and tools of the curriculum design and answer the question: How can I design a curriculum unit that uses a text set to teach middle school English students to integrate knowledge and ideas as indicated by the Common Core State Standards? Finally, it will discuss briefly the importance of the curriculum unit to the profession and establish an evaluation plan.

Setting

The intended context for this curriculum unit is a suburban middle school in Orange County, CA. The junior high school has approximately 1550 students and around 60 staff. The majority of students report to be white: 64% white, 18% Hispanic, 10% Asian, 2% black, 6% other/2 or more races. Just one percent of students is eligible for free and reduced lunch, compared with 55% statewide.
This school’s Academic Performance Index (API), California’s measure of school performance based on California Standards Tests, has measured around 900 for several years, within the possible score range of 200-1000. Compared to the state goal of 800, in 2013 this school ranked near the top, in the ninth decile, when compared with other middle schools in the state. However, it ranked in the fourth decile, or about average, when compared to schools with similar demographics. English language learners and students with disability tested under the target score of 800, and did not meet their improvement targets in 2013 (California Department of Education, 2014b). Class size is generally between thirty-two to thirty-seven students, integrating English Language Learners of level three and higher, as well as mainstreamed special education students.

**Rationale for the Curriculum**

A text set, partnered with a big question and a task with an authentic audience, with a product that can be assessed for student mastery of concepts, will provide a useful resource for me and other teachers. The text set is widely agreed-upon and recommended as a useful tool. The CCSS adoption makes clear the need and demand for newly arranged materials specific to each teacher’s context. New materials are needed because the those currently in use are out of date and do not reflect CCSS focus on intertextual inquiry and critical thinking (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2014c). An individual single thematic unit of 3-6 weeks is a useful building block in preparation for the eventual goal of a curriculum map for the whole year. Therefore, to benefit educators, this curriculum design method will present and discuss course materials that will be effective in teaching intertextual thinking to middle school students.
Curriculum Design and Tools

Before beginning the design, I consulted several model units. Some were available from my district, either directly from another teacher or through file sharing on the district website. I reviewed two sample English units and a sample history unit. I also consulted model units online. Certain teacher websites or blogs shared information, and some sites aggregated teacher lesson plans (readworks.org, dbqproject.com, edutopia.org). Resources on writing lessons from Achievethecore.org were also helpful background and inspiration.

Based on Backwards Mapping (Mctighe & Wiggins, 2012), the first step in designing a CCSS based unit was to identify long-term transfer goals. What will the student be able to do independently in the real world? These were mapped from the standards of focus for this unit, reading standards seven through nine. The number of goals was kept to a minimum, three to five for the unit.

Second, from these long-term transfer goals I defined enduring, overarching understandings, or what successful learners will need to grasp in order to transfer that skill to the real world.

From there, I identified essential questions, deep questions to get students to make meaning based on these overarching understandings, which would also be provocative questions that would engage their interests and inspire inquiry.

For a literature-based unit, an anchor text needed to be selected. Based on the Guide to Creating a Text Set by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) (2014), the first step in a text set curriculum creation is to “identify the anchor text and formulate a line of inquiry” (p.3). Since my colleagues in the English department are
more accustomed to seeing units built around a piece of literature, I approached the creation of the curriculum unit planning to use a “controlling” (Hartman & Allison, 1996) or “sunburst” (Cappiello & Dawes, 2013) model for the text set, with one central piece of literature as an anchor text, and a variety of other texts coming into conversation with it.

The anchor text should, according to the CCSSO, be “a grade-level complex text that meets the complexity demands of the Standards and is worthy of the time and attention of students. Without a rich anchor text, it is impossible to create a worthwhile text set” (2014, p.3). The CCSS further states that “Along with high-quality contemporary works, these texts should be chosen from among seminal U.S. documents, the classics of American literature, and the timeless dramas of Shakespeare” (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010, p.35). The labels of “high quality,” “classic,” and “worthy” are all subjective terms, but there are numerous literary works commonly used and valued by English classes.

In order to select the anchor text for this unit, I listed major texts already commonly used and available at the middle school level in my district, and checked with the high schools’ textbooks and teacher websites to not borrow from their text territory. I also searched online for other units other teachers have written, using search terms of the standards and of the Backward Mapping language. The purpose of this was to do my best to not reinvent the wheel, but to produce something different from what was already available. I found that very few units for the literature I was considering contained the combination of CCSS alignment, text sets, and a focused set of relevant essential questions.
I reviewed the yearlong scope and sequence, considering the themes and arc of the year. I determined that it would be most useful to write a unit for a piece of literature that many teachers in my district teach. I also decided that a unit that would take place in the first part of the year would be best, so that it could provide a model for the development of later units.

I evaluated several possible anchor texts for complexity using the quantitative assessment tool Lexile measure (Metametrics, 2015), which is available for free to all users and quite easy to use. It involves saving an excerpt of each document as a text file, then uploading it for analysis; this was a bit tedious, when checking many texts, but quite straightforward. However, the tool is limited to 1000 word excerpts. Also, since the program uses short sentence length as one measure of simplicity, tags or titles perceived as a one-word sentence weight the score down. I also used qualitative measures rubrics based on qualities of text structure, language features, meaning and knowledge demands as described in CCSS Appendix A (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010).

I analyzed possible themes and essential questions for several possible anchor texts, looking especially for themes that would be beneficial for study in the first part of the year. I then selected an anchor text that seemed most appropriate for the timing in the year, the standards focus, and the thematic relevance.

After selecting the anchor text, I created a few additional long-term transfer goals, overarching understandings and essential questions based on the themes or topics rising from the anchor text. These are ideas which would have enduring value beyond the classroom, offer potential for engaging students, and require uncoverage of abstract ideas
The essential questions related to the content of the literature are provocative questions intended to spur student inquiry. However, like the long-term transfer goals, the number of essential questions should be few in number—“two to five per unit” (p.121). The authors argue against composing too many questions, as “prioritize[ing] content” enables students to focus on key questions.

These essential questions formed the basis of recurring cornerstone tasks (Wiggins & McTighe, 2012), or big performance tasks, as relevant and authentic as possible. I developed a rubric for these tasks, outlining the skills and outcomes to be demonstrated in each task.

Then, according to CCSSO (2014), the text set was completed: “use [ing] databases to research texts around the topic” and then evaluating texts to choose worthy components to the text set, readings that will build knowledge, meaning, and balance (p.3). For a literature-based unit, it was essential to determine the desired complexity level and genres for texts, before locating texts. Other special concerns for the texts included providing for copyright issues, and ensuring that texts provide equity in gender and culture. The PARCC Model Content Framework for ELA/Literacy for Grade 8 suggested around five texts for a text set, with a mix of literature and information (2012, p.5). Other sources suggested a range up to even fifteen or twenty texts (Hartman & Allison, 1996). I strove for a number that would be manageable but provoke the thinking skills desired.

Useful databases are provided by state funding in many states, free for teacher access within that state. From Alaska’s “Digital Pipeline” to Minnesota’s “Elm” and Indiana’s “Inspire,” these virtual libraries allow access through search engines like
EBSCO, Proquest, Gale, and World Book (Metametrics, 2013). California’s entry, on the other hand, is “N/A,” one of only two on the list of states. This will surely soon be rectified. However, I was able to access EBSCO, Newsbank, and parts of Gale by logging in through my local county public library’s website. Other websites that I searched and scanned are presented in the following table:

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internet Text Sources</th>
<th>Site Name</th>
<th>Site Address</th>
<th>Description/ Benefit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>News ELA</td>
<td><a href="https://newsela.com">https://newsela.com</a></td>
<td>Current news articles by topic, able to adjust the Lexile of selected articles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time for Kids</td>
<td><a href="http://www.timeforkids.com">http://www.timeforkids.com</a></td>
<td>Current events and news; has some features available for free and others at a premium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Project Gutenberg</td>
<td><a href="https://www.gutenberg.org">https://www.gutenberg.org</a></td>
<td>Public domain eBooks and texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poetry Foundation</td>
<td><a href="http://www.poetryfoundation.org">http://www.poetryfoundation.org</a></td>
<td>Poetry magazine’s large free online database</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Article of the Week</td>
<td><a href="http://www.kellygallagher.org/article-of-the-week/">http://www.kellygallagher.org/article-of-the-week/</a></td>
<td>Educator Kelly Gallagher’s list of contemporary texts as presented to his high school classes as background reading</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each potential text was evaluated for Lexile, qualitative complexity (difficulty and newness of concept and structure), cultural or literary significance, multimedia variety, interest, appropriateness and quality of writing.

After selecting and grouping the texts, I revisited the performance task ideas and revised the tasks. Then I arranged the texts in a suggested sequence for instruction, and proposed instructional activities to support students’ inquiry and understanding of the texts. Some texts were recommended as extension or challenge assignments for students whose learning should be accelerated or extended.
I wrote sample lesson plan pages for the first few lessons, as a model. This included some recommendations for differentiated support activities for students who need more time or practice, as well as strategies, text-dependent questions, student discussion activities, and daily tasks.

Resources and texts are listed in the following chapter. Examples of class materials (handouts, PowerPoint presentations, etc.) are in the appendices.

**Data Evaluation**

After the completion of the unit, two other teachers joined me in evaluating the curricular information. One was the curricular coordinator for ELA and history at the district office. The other was the department chair at my site. We responded to the perceived use and feasibility of the unit and made suggestions based on its strengths and limitations. We consulted a curriculum rubric published by the prolific New York State Education Department (NYSED) on their EngageNY website, “Tri-State Quality Review Rubric for Lessons & Units: ELA/Literacy (Grades 3-5) and ELA (Grades 6-12) Version 5” (2013) as well as the “Revised Publishers’ Criteria for the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts and Literacy, Grades 3–12” (Coleman & Pimentel, 2012) which presents guidelines for Common Core curriculum developers. However, we also used our years of experience as a guide for perceived difficulties or possible improvements.

**Distribution and Importance to the Profession**

This unit will be important in demonstrating the strategy and thinking behind choosing texts in a text set and establishing effective student tasks to accompany them.
In addition to being fully available within this capstone, the unit will also be shared on my department’s internal website, where it will be made available to other middle schools within my district. The main components of the unit will also be shared on my personal teaching website.

**Conclusion**

This chapter outlined the plan to address the capstone question: *How can I design a curriculum unit that uses a text set to teach middle school English students to integrate knowledge and ideas as indicated by the Common Core Standards?* It laid out the methodology and rationale for this curriculum design unit, the steps and tools of the curriculum design, the significance of the curriculum unit to the profession and an evaluation plan. Chapter four will present the results of this plan: the curriculum unit itself with its goals, questions, tasks, text set, lessons, assessments and pacing guides. Chapter five will reflect on the learnings, limitations, implications and future needs on the topic of designing a curriculum unit using a text set to teach middle school English students to integrate knowledge and ideas as indicated by the Common Core State Standards.
CHAPTER FOUR
Curricular Design

Overview

This chapter describes the curriculum unit design intended to address the capstone question: How can I design a curriculum unit that uses a text set to teach middle school English students to integrate knowledge and ideas as indicated by the Common Core State Standards? After a brief description, the text set list and unit plan is included. An analysis of the resulting unit follows, including notes of patterns and relationships, and connections to the literature review. Finally, a summary of feedback from colleagues and a comparison to several rubrics provides an assessment of the unit.

Description of Curriculum Unit

The unit is titled “Flowers for Algernon”: Intelligence, Connecting Texts, and Connecting People. The unit comprises several related text sets based on the anchor text, “Flowers for Algernon,” (1959) a short story or novelette by Daniel Keyes originally published in The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction (April, 1959) and reprinted in many student anthologies, including Holt literature & language arts: Second course (Beers, Warriner, & Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, inc., 2003).

The unit brings together an array of multimedia texts suitable for eighth grade students in both complexity and subject matter. The texts draw both from contemporary and classic sources, reflecting both the source material readily available online, and the desire for relevant and relatable materials.
The thematic focus is that students consider the nature of intelligence and the brain, and ways that people seek improvement. Through comparing perspectives in various texts, students also explore what we can learn about ourselves through our interactions with and treatment of others. The reading and writing standards focus is that as readers, students practice understanding, integrating, and evaluating the content and structure of various multimedia texts. Students think like writers when analyzing story patterns and allusions, and when critiquing performance interpretations of a text.

Table 3 lists Long Term Goals, Enduring Understandings and Essential Questions addressed by the unit:
### Table 3:

**Long Term Goals, Enduring Understandings and Essential Questions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Long Term Goals</th>
<th>Enduring Understandings</th>
<th>Essential Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Standards Goal:</strong> Students will be able to form their own conclusions about a topic after integrating, evaluating, and balancing information/arguments from multiple sources (R8.7, 8.8)</td>
<td>1. Readers need to strategically and critically read, organize, make judgments and find connections to deeply understand and then decide what to believe.</td>
<td>1. When reading several related things, how do I know what to focus on and what to believe?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Standards Goal:</strong> Students will be able to appreciate how a piece of lit is rooted in history/lit/tradition/myth/types (RL8.9)</td>
<td>2. There are patterns of stories and characters that repeat throughout the canon/ human mindset. Authors write based in a specific culture and tradition, and use that to enrich their writing.</td>
<td>2. How are modern stories reflections of classic stories?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Standards Goal:</strong> Students will be able to formulate a reasoned critique of a performance/interpretation of a piece (RL8.7)</td>
<td>3. To communicate effectively, writers consider topic, audience, and purpose, and choose their genre and medium (knowing the strengths and limits of each).</td>
<td>3. Why do authors create what they do, in the form they do?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. Thematic/Reflective Goal:</strong> Students will be able to understand that their choices, grit and hard work play a large role in their learning and success (growth mindset, self-empowerment and self-responsibility)</td>
<td>4. The brain is malleable and can be improved through hard work and determined practice.</td>
<td>4. What can people control about their brains? How can I make my brain work better?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5. Thematic/Reflective Goal:</strong> Students will be able to accept their own gifts, strengths, challenges and struggles (EQ), and actively recognize those of others (anti-bullying/empathy), recognizing innate worth in themselves and all people and giving respect accordingly.</td>
<td>5. All people deserve respect; worth is not dependent on IQ or ability (among other factors) (<strong>yearlong theme in 8th grade, incorporating race, identity, etc.</strong>)</td>
<td>5. How does society respond to differences in intelligence and ability? How will I? What can be done to help everyone be respected and connected?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Genres of the texts in the text sets include article, essay excerpt, video lecture, quotation, mythology, movie trailer, poetry, novel excerpt, play, film, movie review, short story, letter, and website.

**Description and Justification of Anchor Text**

“Flowers for Algernon” is written in the form of journal entries telling the rise and tragic fall of Charlie Gordon, a low-IQ 37-year old man who has brain surgery to make him smarter, in an effort to have friends, be accepted, and improve himself. When he realizes the effects will be temporary, he uses his abilities to try to advance scientific knowledge and make a difference for others.

The short story/ novellette version of “Flowers for Algernon” is the original version, winner of the Hugo award. Its length, around 40 pages, is much longer than the 2-5 page texts most commonly read in middle school English classes, but short enough to do most of the reading in class (whereas for full-length novels students generally have to read at home). This is an important feature for a text taught in the first part of the year, when instruction and demonstration in effective reading techniques is a valuable use of class time. Also, the full novel has some sexually explicit passages that have caused it to be banned or challenged in some districts across the country. Due to a history of conservative and active parents challenging texts and policies, teaching the full novel would require approval by the district literature committee. However, the novel is not superior to the original short story for the 8th grade reading audience and the purposes intended by this unit, so the short story is the preferred text.

Student interest will be piqued by the science fiction topic and the pathos of the story. The narrative addresses important social and scientific themes of empathy, self-
knowledge and self-actualization, scientific ethics, and brain development. These are topics of high interest for middle school thinkers, and topics of relevance for scholars embarking on their final year of studies before high school. The text has deep themes allowing for deep thinking and complex tasks, as well as interesting language usage to analyze, as Charlie’s thinking and writing abilities improve and then wane through the course of the story.

The text complexity of this piece has a Lexile measure of 910L. While this is slightly below the recommended grade level band of 925-1185 for middle school, the qualitative demands place it within the appropriate reading range for eighth grade.

The story is told from a single point of view, and the journal style is fairly clear to follow, being strictly chronological. However, the language use requires some attention and cognitive load: nonstandard spelling/usage reflecting protagonist’s development; various types of irony are used; and sentence structure is simplistic at times but builds in density in the middle section (when the protagonist’s intelligence is at its peak). As to the understanding of meaning: multiple themes, allusions, symbols provide complex levels of meaning, and themes are developed/revealed over the course of the long text. Students will require some background-building in scientific concepts to appreciate the ideas in the story. However, many students will be able to relate to universal experiences of bullying, wanting to fit in, and wanting to be smarter.

The task demands further support the appropriate reading level of this piece, as students do complex thinking to make connections within and across this piece to form new understandings.
Standards

The unit is driven by themes and topics that engage various components of the “Integration of Knowledge and Ideas” reading standards 7-9 of the Common Core State Standards, shown in Table 4 below:

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade 8 CCSS Reading Standards 7-9</th>
<th>Reading Literature Standard</th>
<th>Reading Information Standard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.7 Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.</td>
<td>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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.</td>
<td>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.8 Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.</td>
<td>(RL.8.8 not applicable to literature)</td>
<td>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.8 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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.9 Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.</td>
<td>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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.</td>
<td>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.9 Analyze a case in which two or more texts provide conflicting information on the same topic and identify where the texts disagree on matters of fact or interpretation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While this unit’s direction and focus is chosen to reflect reading standards, other domains are necessarily integrated for comprehension and assessment of the material.

Audience and Timing

The standards and text levels have been aligned to eighth grade standards, as the anchor text is commonly designated for eighth grade via anthology publications. However, the tasks and texts could be adapted to 7th-9th grade.

This unit is designed to be presented in the first half of the year, beginning in the second or third month of school. One reason for this placement is that the theme of
learning about the brain and one’s own learning, as well the social theme of respecting others, may have maximum payoff if done early in the year. Also, some of the instructional strategies suggested are geared toward foundational skills such as teaching students annotation and metacognition. Presenting the unit later in the year can be just as successful, but teachers would likely vary the focus of the strategies based on student knowledge and skill.

**Unit Design and Options**

This full unit is divided into four discrete text sets, each with a different thematic or standards focus, and each with an accompanying performance task.

It is intended that the unit be an open resource for teachers to adapt to the curricular needs of their students. Depending on the time and scope desired for the unit, instructors may opt to select one or more of the text sets to use, or may use them all. The first text set, focusing on the topic of intelligence and on the standards in reading informational text, may be considered the primary option, as will be discussed further below. The sequence/pacing guide incorporates the texts and performance tasks from all four text sets, with notes about alternate sequencing. Using the four text sets together will result in a long but in-depth unit, giving students practice in all of the components of the literary and informational standards. It is to be understood that teachers may have other plans for teaching some of these standards through other readings, or may use the unit differently if they are teaching the unit in the spring rather than the fall.

An abbreviated text set is also included at the end for teachers who wish to address reading standards 8.7-8.9, both literary and informational, with the minimum amount of sources/time (4 texts total in addition to the anchor text) as a brief survey.
Many of the texts used are available on the Internet. The few remaining texts are mainly available within a student anthology or are older texts that are not under copyright.

**Text Set A: Intelligence and the Brain**

Text set A incorporates contemporary multimedia nonfiction texts on the topic of the brain (including intelligences and mindset). The first seven texts are presented as a complementary set, in order to provide many opportunities for students to learn various aspects of a topic. The final two texts are presented together synoptically, as variations of a single idea for comparison.

Through this unit, students will be able to appreciate that their choices, grit and hard work play a large role in their learning and success: they will have new understanding of growth mindset (Dweck, 2006), self-empowerment, and responsibility. They will be asking, “What can people control about their brains? How can I make my brain work better?” In addressing the standards, they will also be learning to form their own conclusions about a topic after integrating, evaluating, and balancing information/arguments from multiple sources, asking, “When reading several related things, how do I know what to focus on and what to believe?”

The reading standards addressed are Informational Reading standards one and six through ten of the eighth grade Common Core State Standards:

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1 Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.**
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.7 Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.8 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.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.9 Analyze a case in which two or more texts provide conflicting information on the same topic and identify where the texts disagree on matters of fact or interpretation.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.10 By the end of the year, read and comprehend literary nonfiction at the high end of the grades 6–8 text complexity band independently and proficiently. (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010, p.35)

Other standards in writing, speaking and listening, and language are addressed to a lesser extent through this unit.

The text set and performance tasks for Text Set A follow.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title and Author</th>
<th>Text Type</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Main Ideas</th>
<th>Complexity and Rationale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“12 Things We Know About How the Brain Works” - Shane Parrish</td>
<td>Web Article/ List</td>
<td>The Week news aggregator site: <a href="http://theweek.com/article/index/248669/12-things-we-know-about-how-the-brain-works">http://theweek.com/article/index/248669/12-things-we-know-about-how-the-brain-works</a></td>
<td>This article summarizes facts from the book <em>Brain Rules</em>, summarizing useful facts and the science behind them: e.g., effects of exercise, sleep, stress, trust; how encoding/memory work.</td>
<td>Lexile: 900 (slightly below grade level). List format, though numbers can be left off student version so they can find and number the sections themselves. Several complex graphs support text, but are supplemental to discerning meaning. Language is largely conversational, with relatable concrete examples given. Overall, moderately complex, suitable for beginning of unit, with purpose of activating interest and building background.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title and Author</td>
<td>Text Type</td>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Main Ideas</td>
<td>Complexity and Rationale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Beyond Wit &amp; Grit” – Howard Gardner</td>
<td>Video Lecture</td>
<td>Youtube video, linked from Gardner’s website: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vnqWZdcC8AE">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vnqWZdcC8AE</a></td>
<td>Gardner’s video explains his additional character focus points for success: Wit (IQ) and “grit,” (persistence) but also ethics, excellence, engagement</td>
<td>Lexile – N/A (no transcript available). Gardner speaks in comprehensible language and examples, and a few visual slides help to illustrate points. However, students may benefit from a listening guide. Connects the language of Multiple Intelligences to the idea of “grit” (to Duckworth video).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The Effort Effect” – Marina Krakovsky</td>
<td>Article</td>
<td>Stanford alumni magazine: <a href="http://alumni.stanford.edu/get/page/magazine/article/?article_id=32124">http://alumni.stanford.edu/get/page/magazine/article/?article_id=32124</a></td>
<td>Effect of Dweck’s growth mindset on many examples: sports, math students, bragging, personality, morals.</td>
<td>Lexile 1150 (On level) The level and examples are on-target for students, and some of the examples will be relatable and relevant. The main difficulty will be the length (six pages). Depending on reading level, excerpts or group work may lighten the load.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(List of quotes, e.g.: It’s not that I’m so smart, it’s just that I stay with problems longer. -Albert Einstein)</td>
<td>Quotes</td>
<td>Collected from web; included at end of unit</td>
<td>12 quotes (from famous people) that connect to the ideas of grit and/or growth mindset</td>
<td>Lexile 730 (Below level) The quotes are mainly easy to comprehend; however, the task of connecting them to the previous texts and providing meaningful commentary as to the connections will be at an appropriate level of rigor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title and Author</td>
<td>Text Type</td>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Main Ideas</td>
<td>Complexity and Rationale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optional articles – for cold read summative assessment</td>
<td>Article</td>
<td>Web MD: <a href="http://www.webmd.com/brain/news/20121218/iq-test-really-measure-intelligence">http://www.webmd.com/brain/news/20121218/iq-test-really-measure-intelligence</a></td>
<td>Report on study that questions single IQ score, divides IQ into short-term memory, reasoning, and verbal recall.</td>
<td>Lexile: 1120 (on level) Having built background, students will find the language and ideas in this text easy to assimilate with the anchor text and other texts in the text set; appropriate for independent/cold read if placed at end of unit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. “Does IQ Test Really Measure Intelligence?” – Denise Mann</td>
<td>Article</td>
<td>Daily Mail: <a href="http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-2250681/IQ-tests-meaningless-simplistic-claim-researchers.html">http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-2250681/IQ-tests-meaningless-simplistic-claim-researchers.html</a></td>
<td>Same topic as above, for comparison in approach</td>
<td>Lexile: 1210 (slightly above). Same as above. Short (single sentence) paragraphs may reduce cohesion/easy reading for some students; it will be important to mark in divisions and main ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. “IQ tests are 'meaningless and too simplistic' claim researchers” - Nicholas McDermott</td>
<td>Article</td>
<td>Daily Mail: <a href="http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-2250681/IQ-tests-meaningless-simplistic-claim-researchers.html">http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-2250681/IQ-tests-meaningless-simplistic-claim-researchers.html</a></td>
<td>Same topic as above, for comparison in approach</td>
<td>Lexile: 1210 (slightly above). Same as above. Short (single sentence) paragraphs may reduce cohesion/easy reading for some students; it will be important to mark in divisions and main ideas.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 6

**Tasks for Text Set A**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Prompt</th>
<th>Instructional Notes</th>
<th>CCSS Reading Alignment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Optional On-demand task) Summative/ Cold Read Assessment: Reading and comparing texts</td>
<td>Read what Charlie says about IQ in the April 21st entry, comparing and contrasting Dr. Strauss’s and Dr. Nemur’s views. Read two articles about the same topic on IQ. Then respond to the questions below.</td>
<td>If the relevant passage from “Flowers for Algernon” is provided directly, students could do questions 1-2 as part of a final exam at the end of the unit or the trimester. Whenever it is done, this assessment would provide valuable information about students’ progress and growing independence in reading/comprehending, and integrating knowledge/ideas across texts. Question 3 could be eliminated at any time for students who need a smaller, more focused task, such as EL learners.</td>
<td>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.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. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.8 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. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.9 Analyze a case in which two or more texts provide conflicting information on the same topic and identify where the texts disagree on matters of fact or interpretation. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.10 Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Compare the two texts – how do they differ in approaching the same topic? (graphic organizer)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. From the story, who would agree with the articles most – Nemur or Strauss? Why? Cite evidence to prove your argument.</td>
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<td>3. How do the ideas in these articles connect/compare with other information you have read in this unit? (What is the same/ new/different/ important?)</td>
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<td>4. What is the significance of these ideas about IQ? How do they matter to you, your world, or your future?</td>
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<td>Task</td>
<td>Prompt</td>
<td>Instructional Notes</td>
<td>CCSS Reading Alignment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Performance Task A: Group</td>
<td><strong>Informational Writing/Speaking Performance Task-</strong></td>
<td>In its organization and use of evidence and commentary, this task is also a building block toward argumentative essay-writing which must be taught in the first trimester based on PLC goals. (See rubric in Appendix B) Based on student needs and previous experience, significant support may be needed in choosing, organizing, incorporating and explaining evidence. Opportunity for instruction in presentation skills, technology skills, and leading a group discussion.</td>
<td><strong>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.7</strong> Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words. <strong>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.8</strong> 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. <strong>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.9</strong> Analyze a case in which two or more texts provide conflicting information on the same topic and identify where the texts disagree on matters of fact or interpretation. Other standards: <strong>W 8.2, 8.4, 8.5, 8.6, 8.10; S/L 8.1-8.6</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task</td>
<td><strong>“What can you control about your brain? Why and how should you do so? How can it make a difference in your life?”</strong> After finding out the answers to these questions, use the information to motivate and inspire other students at our school. Over the next two weeks, you will have the chance to read articles about the brain and learning, and you can do additional research too. Goal: Working with two other students, create an informational and inspirational speech/presentation or motivational video about intelligence and learning. Prepare to present this to a small group of seventh graders, take questions, and facilitate a short discussion. Select facts from the readings and research you’ve done, and explain the impact of these ideas. Predict your audience’s misunderstandings and concerns, and try to address them. Use a positive, balanced tone and language that will help the students understand your ideas and stay motivated to keep trying and learning as they continue through middle school and beyond.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Task</td>
<td>Prompt</td>
<td>Instructional Notes</td>
<td>CCSS Reading Alignment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Performance Task A2 (Alternative - Individual Task)</td>
<td>What should or shouldn’t people do to try to get smarter? After reading “Flowers for Algernon” and related texts as presented in this unit, write an essay that makes an argument about what steps are most important for people to take to become more intelligent. Include a stance about increasing intelligence through scientific/medical means, as Charlie did. Support your discussion with evidence from the texts. Include a counterclaim and rebuttal. End with a personal reflection: What implications can you draw for your life?</td>
<td>Students will require support in annotating, documenting and organizing their notes as they read, and various aspects of essay writing and quoting/citing sources. The prompt could be simplified for struggling learners by eliminating the scientific/medical part of the question.</td>
<td>CCSS Reading Alignment: R 8.1, 8.9 Other standards: W 8.1 a-e, 8.4, 8.5, 8.9. 8.10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This text set option should be selected because of its extensive practice in the standards of reading informational texts. Students have multiple opportunities to engage with nonfiction texts, with various levels of scaffolding in reading, comprehending, analyzing and evaluating the ideas within. Students will find the contemporary ideas of growth mindset and multiple intelligences relevant and engaging. The primary performance task, an interactive presentation to inform and motivate other students, is authentic use of the information. In addition, the content of the texts builds understanding of and appreciation for the situations presented in the anchor text, and perspective to judge its relevance in today’s world.

Text Set B: Allusions and Patterns

Text set B contains the primary sources for several of the anchor text’s literary allusions, as well as some classic texts that parallel the character development or plot of the anchor text. These texts are presented as supporting texts to the anchor text; “Flowers for Algernon” is the authoritative text, and students will consider the classic texts in light of the anchor text. The last two texts (Frankenstein and Pygmalion), containing similar plot/character patterns, could be selected and examined in small groups or for extension activities, but are not represented in the instructional sequence.

Through this text set, students will be able to form their own conclusions about a topic after integrating, evaluating, and balancing information/arguments from multiple sources, asking, “When reading several related texts, how do I know what to focus on and what to believe?” Students will also be able to appreciate how a piece of literature is rooted in history/literature/tradition/myth/archetypes, pursuing the question, “How are modern stories reflections of classic stories?”
The reading standards addressed are Literature Reading standards four and nine of the eighth grade Common Core State Standards:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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. (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010, p.35)

Other standards in writing, speaking and listening, and language are addressed to a lesser extent through this unit.

The text set and performance task for Text Set B follow.
Table 7

**Text Set List B: Allusions and Patterns**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title and Author</th>
<th>Text Type</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Main Ideas</th>
<th>Complexity and Rationale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Genesis 3 – New International Version</td>
<td>Mythology</td>
<td>Bible</td>
<td>Eve is tempted and eats the apple; Adam follows, and they are cast out of the garden.</td>
<td>Lexile – 1030 (on level). Other translations are available, with different Lexile levels, such as the New Living Translation, at 860L. Depending on student familiarity and needs, any translation may be used. Explains allusion made by a character criticizing Charlie’s rise in knowledge as unnatural.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pandora’s Box - Louis Untermeyer</td>
<td>Mythology</td>
<td>McDougal Littell 8th grade textbook, p 456</td>
<td>Pandora’s curiosity leads to all the evils escaping out into the world – except hope</td>
<td>Lexile – 970 (on level). Alternate versions of the story of Pandora may be used, but this one is available in some anthology copies, and is written with this level in mind. Students should be able to understand the connections with the anchor text, of curiosity leading to more than one bargained for, and of a message of hope remaining at the end.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robinson Crusoe - trailer</td>
<td>Movie trailer</td>
<td><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wmOZeZO0sGo">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wmOZeZO0sGo</a></td>
<td>Marooned, lonely man on island… Charlie references this and feels sorry for him.</td>
<td>Lexile – N/A. This is a simple visual summary of the setup of the story for students who are not familiar with it. The original text or another version could be used, but this short background is enough for students to be able to understand the allusion and try to connect to Charlie’s situation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paradise Lost excerpt</td>
<td>Poem</td>
<td>Poetry Foundation: <a href="http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/174987">http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/174987</a> Parts of Book 1 and book 9</td>
<td>Forbidden tree leads to loss of innocence… similar to above</td>
<td>Lexile – 1330 (above level) With its high level, this may be used only for honors if desired. This work is mentioned in the anchor text, but the content is very similar to the Genesis passage that it is, itself, based on.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title and Author</td>
<td>Text Type</td>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Main Ideas</td>
<td>Complexity and Rationale</td>
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<tr>
<td>Icarus (Lego animation video)</td>
<td>Mythology</td>
<td><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7W1TZ16W-3k">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7W1TZ16W-3k</a></td>
<td>Despite his father’s warnings, Icarus flew too close to the sun and his wax wings melted. He fell into the sea.</td>
<td>Lexile – N/A. Alternate versions of the story of Icarus may be used, but this one may be accessible/entertaining. Students should be able to understand the theme of ambition leading to disaster, and discuss whether Charlie or the doctors are guilty of this.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXTENSION TEXT: Poetics: Aristotel (excerpts from part 11, 13, 14)</td>
<td>Essay</td>
<td><a href="http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/poetics.html">http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/poetics.html</a></td>
<td>Describes some of the key components of Greek tragedies.</td>
<td>Lexile – 1150 (on level) but very complex abstract argument to follow. Suitable for honors students who need a challenge. Other students could use an outline/ summary of the text, perhaps with a few quotes, to determine how the anchor text compares with the ideas of the classic tragedy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optional: Frankenstein – Mary Shelley (excerpts from Chapters 13, 17)</td>
<td>Novel</td>
<td>Project Gutenberg: <a href="https://www.gutenberg.org/files/84/84-h/84-h.htm">https://www.gutenberg.org/files/84/84-h/84-h.htm</a></td>
<td>Topics of isolation and the need for love parallel Charlie’s growth.</td>
<td>Lexile – 1200 (slightly above level). Advanced vocabulary may intimidate some readers, but this is a good text for learning fix-up strategies and reading ahead to find meaning. After reading alone, students will benefit from hearing the teacher read this aloud. Connections to anchor text are clear.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optional: Pygmalion – George Bernard Shaw (excerpts from Act II, Act IV)</td>
<td>Play</td>
<td>Project Gutenberg: <a href="http://www.gutenberg.org/files/3825/3825-h/3825-h.htm">http://www.gutenberg.org/files/3825/3825-h/3825-h.htm</a></td>
<td>Topic of ambition and desire to improve; improvement can lead to dissatisfaction</td>
<td>Lexile – 1340 for whole play, somewhat lower for shorter excerpts (on level). The vocabulary and syntax are accessible. With guidance, students can judge tone and attitudes of characters through the dialogue, and connect to Charlie’s unfulfilled search for happiness through changing one aspect of himself.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Task</td>
<td>Prompt</td>
<td>Instructional Notes</td>
<td>CCSS Reading Alignment</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Performance Task B – Writing about Allusions</strong></td>
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</table>
*There are no new ideas. There are only new ways of making them felt.* - Audre Lorde  
Identify an allusion used directly by Keyes OR a classic story that Keyes’ story parallels. Trace what topic or idea both stories address, citing examples from both the classic and modern stories to show the similarities. How does the author draw on themes from the other story? How does the author’s portrayal of the character or theme differ from the classic source?  
Then compile this information to write a short argumentative essay explaining the connection, and evaluating whether Keyes’ use of this idea in the story is effective in communicating an idea to modern audiences. Be sure to start with an introduction identifying your sources, justify your answer with examples and explanations based on the text, address an opposing view, and conclude by commenting on the theme’s significance. | Preparatory assignment:  
Complete the allusions study guide by answering these questions:  
**Quote:** Copy down the lines that contain an allusion.  
**Source:** What outside work is being referenced?  
**Explanations:** What is being suggested by the allusion? (How does the author connect or transform the source text?)  
**Purpose:** What deeper meaning is brought into the story by using this allusion? Or what feeling or mood is created?  
Ideally, this assignment should be done twice, with the first instance being scaffolded (working together with the class or a classmate) and the second instance done alone.  
See the abbreviated text set task list on page 4 for an alternative writing task in the voice of the author. | **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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.  
**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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.  
**Other Standards:** W 8.2a-f (writing informational essay) |
This text set option should be selected because students will find new appreciation for the anchor text by investigating the stories and patterns both referenced and reflected by the modern work. The anchor text is rich in cultural and textual allusions, and these should not go unnoticed by student readers. The classic texts are close parallels, allowing readers to recognize the common plotlines and themes, leading to the bigger idea of the patterns within human storytelling. These are all valuable classic texts for cultural literacy and preparation for future reading. Students will be more confident and better equipped as they continue to encounter allusions from mythological and religious texts in the future.

The Bible is specifically mentioned as a source for study of allusions in the CCSS 8th grade standard, and is appropriate to read as cultural knowledge/literature when mentioned in an anthology text. It should be noted that though the passage from Genesis is listed as one of several “mythology” texts, this is not to be a judgment as to its importance. The label of mythology has no bearing on the veracity of a story; a myth’s origins could be truthful or hyperbolic or symbolic or fictional.

Text Set C: Performance Critique/Movie Review

Text set C presents film versions of the anchor text, along with reviews of the films. The film versions are presented in comparison to the short story; the short story is the controlling text. Two film versions are listed, but it is to be expected that with time restraints, instructors will generally choose only one of the two to present. The movie reviews are paired as conflicting texts, with one positive and one negative review for each movie version.
Through this unit, students will be able to formulate a reasoned critique of a performance/interpretation of a piece, understanding that to communicate effectively, writers consider topic, audience, and purpose, and choose their genre and medium (knowing the strengths and limits of each). They will be asking, “Why do authors create what they do, in the form they do?”

The reading standards addressed are Reading Literature standard seven and Informational Reading standards eight and nine of the eighth grade Common Core State Standards:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.8 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.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.9 Analyze a case in which two or more texts provide conflicting information on the same topic and identify where the texts disagree on matters of fact or interpretation.
Other standards in writing, speaking and listening, and language are addressed to a lesser extent through this unit.

The text set and performance task for Text Set C follow.
## Table 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text Set List C: Performance Critique/Movie Review</th>
<th>Title and Author</th>
<th>Text Type</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Main Ideas</th>
<th>Complexity and Rationale</th>
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<tr>
<td>         </td>
<td><strong>Charly</strong> (1968)</td>
<td>Movie</td>
<td>(purchase/library)</td>
<td>Movie taken from novel version of story. Contains some “1960s innovations” – dream/subconscious sequences, etc.</td>
<td>Academy Award for best actor. Based on the novel version, but still similar enough for comparison with the short story. Students can judge director and actor choices, and effectiveness of movie based on genre standards. Overall positive reviews, but now feels dated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>      </td>
<td><strong>Flowers for Algernon</strong> (2000)</td>
<td>Movie</td>
<td>(purchase/library)</td>
<td>Movie updated, closer to novel than 1968 version (approved by author).</td>
<td>Movie received mixed reviews overall. Makes for interesting comparison to the short story, or to the earlier movie version if time allows (such as showing the beginning of both movies).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>      </td>
<td>“Flowers' wilts in light of modern day -”</td>
<td>Newspaper movie review</td>
<td>USA today – accessed through Newsbank</td>
<td>Gives 2000 version 1.5 stars out of 5.</td>
<td>1140 Lexile (On level). Mainly straightforward negative review</td>
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<tr>
<td>Task</td>
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<td>Instructional Notes</td>
<td>CCSS Reading Alignment</td>
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| **Performance** | **Task C: Evaluating Conflicting Movie Reviews** | Whose review is right? (*Instructors should differentiate this task according to group abilities.*) | **Preparatory Activities:**
1) Watch excerpts from a movie based on Keyes’ Story “Flowers for Algernon.” (Teacher’s choice: Charly (1968) or Flowers for Algernon (2000))
2) Complete Movie Adaptation Viewing Guide handout.

The instructor may choose either movie version to focus on. Students could view the second film and write a comparison/recommendation as an extension activity.

The second movie version could serve as a scaffolding/demonstration exercise: while viewing an excerpt of the film, model using the Movie Adaptation Viewing Guide. Demonstrate reading the articles, and model using a chart to compare the viewpoints.

The task can be pared down, or split into multiple assignments. |

Part 1:
Read two movie reviews about this film, and identify the main argument in each one. Notice when the reviewers based their decisions on evidence or where they provide unsubstantiated opinions. Analyze the two reviews side-by-side and note where they agree and disagree. Explain why the reviews might vary as they did, based on your knowledge of the movie genre, the review genre, and/or the sources of the reviews.

Part 2:
Then make your own judgment and recommendation about the movie. Comment on several specific choices made by the directors and actors. (Note: While your review might agree or disagree with some of the same elements as a reviewer, you should discuss a different combination of elements.)

Part 3:
Include a commentary on the benefits and drawbacks of reading the story versus watching it. | CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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.  
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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.  
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.8 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.  
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.9 Analyze a case in which two or more texts provide conflicting information on the same topic and identify where the texts disagree on matters of fact or interpretation.  
Other standards:
W 8.1, 8.4, 8.5, 8.6, 8.9b, 8.10  
L 8.1-8.6 |
This text set option should be selected because film versions of stories are inherently engaging for students, and are a significant form of “literature” that they will be encountering throughout their lives. The pairing of a movie with two conflicting movie reviews is a natural and relevant reading opportunity in evaluating conflicting voices and sorting through their arguments, then coming to one’s own viewpoint and being able to support it with relevant evidence.

Text Set D: Respect for All

Text set D has students explore the themes of bullying and respect for all ability levels, through a variety of genre and voices. This is arranged with complementary texts, grouped by themes of treatment/respect of others with different abilities.

Through this unit, students will be able to accept their own gifts, strengths, challenges and struggles (developing their EQ, or emotional intelligence quotient), and actively recognize those of others (anti-bullying/empathy), recognizing innate worth in themselves and all people and giving respect accordingly. They will work toward the understanding that all people deserve respect; worth is not dependent on IQ or ability (among other factors). This is a yearlong theme in 8th grade literature, incorporating race, identity, and ability. Students will be grappling with the questions: How does society respond to differences in intelligence and ability? How will I? What can be done to help everyone be respected and connected?

The reading standards addressed are Reading Literature standards two, eight and ten of the eighth grade Common Core State Standards:
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.8 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.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.10 By the end of the year, read and comprehend literary nonfiction at the high end of the grades 6–8 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

Other standards in writing, speaking and listening, and language are addressed to a lesser extent through this unit.

The text set and performance task for Text Set D follow:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title and Author</th>
<th>Text Type</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Main Ideas</th>
<th>Complexity and Rationale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Raymond’s Run” by Toni Cade Bambara</td>
<td>short story</td>
<td>Holt 8th grade textbook</td>
<td>African-American girl with developmentally disabled brother – loves to run, learns to balance her love of winning with her respect for her competitor and her love for her brother. Values of hard work and self-confidence are stated.</td>
<td>Lexile 1270 (Slightly above level). First person young person’s voice makes this accessible, but unfamiliar idioms/allusions and run-on sentences may challenge some readers. Poetic and well-written. Themes tie in to both Text Set A (grit, etc.) and the following texts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Disability Etiquette”</td>
<td>Website</td>
<td>Disability Rights &amp; Resources, <a href="http://disability-rights.org/etiq.htm">http://disability-rights.org/etiq.htm</a>.</td>
<td>Outlines appropriate behavior, conversational cues and common courtesies to internalize and enact when interacting with a person with a disability.</td>
<td>Lexile 1070 (On level) Simple list format makes this easy to read. Special focus on the language/terminology section will help students be ready to write about ability levels in a sensitive way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poem: “Only One Me” Sean Mauricette (aka SUBLIMINAL)</td>
<td>Poem (Video of spoken word available)</td>
<td>Self-published on his blog, <a href="https://youtu.be/z8xMSOMtrG4">https://youtu.be/z8xMSOMtrG4</a> -</td>
<td>This poem’s speaker describes being bullied, feeling depressed and skipping school to avoid the harassment. Spiraling downhill emotionally, the speaker ultimately comes to accept and appreciate his/her unique identities.</td>
<td>Lexile: N/A. Video reading with kid voices. Simplistic but with some repetition to note. Kids will relate easily and can connect this to the anchor text in terms of bullying and each person’s need for respect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title and Author</td>
<td>Text Type</td>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Main Ideas</td>
<td>Complexity and Rationale</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Shoulders”</td>
<td>Poem</td>
<td><a href="http://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/shoulders">http://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/shoulders</a></td>
<td>Nye’s poem presents a man carrying his son across the street, and makes the analogy that we all must carry each other and care this much.</td>
<td>Lexile: N/A. Short poem. Poem imagery is simple, but ending requires interpreting - symbolism of rain, road, dream, carrying each other. Meaning is explained in second half of poem; minimal inference of theme needed. Ties to anchor text in Charlie’s decision to work to help others while he can.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naomi Shihab Nye</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Table 12

**Tasks for Text Set D**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task Performance</th>
<th>Prompt</th>
<th>Instructional Notes</th>
<th>CCSS Reading Alignment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Task D: Building Respect and Connections at Our School</strong></td>
<td>Charlie thought increased intelligence would bring him friends. Instead, his new awareness led him to realize how he had been mistreated and how he was experiencing discrimination. As he saw, society often fails to recognize the gifts and innate worth in all people, choosing to judge them on a few measures such as intelligence, beauty, etc. In fact, no one is “normal…” – but perhaps people look for differences as a reason to separate others and make themselves feel more normal and secure. What needs to be done at our school in order to help everyone be more respected and connected? Your research may include print and digital sources, interviews, or other data. Find evidence and report what people need to understand, start doing or stop doing, in order to make a difference. Students may use Animoto etc. to create a video, or Prezi, and these will be shared/viewed in class and outsiders will be invited. Some will be shared on the morning student video announcement show.</td>
<td>(Rubric not provided.) Based on the texts in this unit, students may focus on ideas for respecting all people regardless of intelligence or ability, though they could examine other causes of prejudice and discrimination. Depending on other texts taught throughout the year, this could be done later and could then more deeply incorporate other aspects beyond intelligence/ability. For example, after introducing <em>Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry</em> and civil rights/race issues, students could prepare to investigate and address issues of equity in race, gender, religion, age, etc. Many other texts could bring in current events, poetry, etc. on these aspects.</td>
<td>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Rubric not provided.) Based on the texts in this unit, students may focus on ideas for respecting all people regardless of intelligence or ability, though they could examine other causes of prejudice and discrimination. Depending on other texts taught throughout the year, this could be done later and could then more deeply incorporate other aspects beyond intelligence/ability. For example, after introducing <em>Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry</em> and civil rights/race issues, students could prepare to investigate and address issues of equity in race, gender, religion, age, etc. Many other texts could bring in current events, poetry, etc. on these aspects.</td>
<td>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.8 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.</td>
<td><strong>Other standards:</strong> W.8.4-8.10; SL.8-9.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This text set option should be selected because it brings students into the deeper themes of the story and allows them to build those themes into their self-concept. It requires them to make meaning and apply what they are discovering about their beliefs and their treatment of other people. Since this text set ties in with a yearlong theme that echoes in other anchor texts commonly used in eighth grade, it would prove valuable in supporting discussions of the themes in the anchor text, even if the performance task is reserved for a later time after reading other related major texts.

**Text Set E: Abbreviated/Overview Text Set Option**

This final collection is an abbreviated set of four texts selected from the other text sets. It includes two texts from Text Set A: Intelligence and the Brain, one text from Text Set B: Allusions and Patterns, and one text from Text Set C: Performance Critique/Movie Review.

Through this unit, students will be able to briefly consider the questions: “When reading several related texts, how do I know what to focus on and what to believe?”; “How are modern stories reflections of classic stories?”; “Why do authors create what they do, in the form they do?”; “What can people control about their brains?”; and “How can I make my brain work better?”

The following reading standards are addressed in this unit, through two performance tasks (one literary and one informational):

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1** Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.7 Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.8 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.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.9 Analyze a case in which two or more texts provide conflicting information on the same topic and identify where the texts disagree on matters of fact or interpretation.

Other standards in writing, speaking and listening, and language are addressed to a lesser extent through this unit.

The text set and performance task for Text Set E follow:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Title and Author</strong></th>
<th><strong>Text Type</strong></th>
<th><strong>Source</strong></th>
<th><strong>Main Ideas</strong></th>
<th><strong>Complexity and Rationale</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Genesis 3 – New International Version</td>
<td>Narrative</td>
<td><em>Bible</em></td>
<td>Eve is tempted and eats the apple; Adam follows, and they are cast out of the garden.</td>
<td>Lexile – 1030 (on level) Other translations are available, with different Lexile levels, such as the New Living Translation, at 860L. Depending on student familiarity and needs, any translation may be used. Explains allusion made by character criticizing Charlie’s rise in knowledge as unnatural.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Beyond Wit &amp; Grit: Howard Gardner's '8 for 8’</td>
<td>Video Lecture</td>
<td>YouTube video, linked from Gardner’s website. <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vnqWZdcC8AE">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vnqWZdcC8AE</a></td>
<td>Gardner’s video explains his additional character focus points for success: To “wit” (knowledge) and “grit,” (hard work) add ethics, excellence, engagement</td>
<td>Lexile – N/A (no transcript available). Gardner speaks in comprehensible language and examples, and a few visual slides help to illustrate points. However, students may benefit from a listening guide. Mentions both Multiple Intelligences and the idea of “grit” (see Duckworth video for more).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 14

Tasks for Text Set E

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Prompt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Task 1 – Author Interview (Texts 1-3, literature standards) | (*Instructors should differentiate this task according to group abilities.) **Student Prompt:** How can an author change something from the past into something modern and relevant? Pretend that you are Daniel Keyes, the author of “Flowers for Algernon.” You are being interviewed about your story, the inspiration for it, and versions that came after it. Write an interview of at least five questions in which you, as Keyes, reflect on the texts you alluded to, and the movie version made from your work. You will imagine Keyes’ words and views based on (and citing the evidence from) “Flowers for Algernon,” notes from your movie viewing guide on *Charly,* and notes from your allusions study guide on Genesis 3. (Note: Questions that are factual – rather than opinion/interpretation – might require some research for Keyes’ most likely answers.) You will turn in a movie viewing guide, the allusions study guide, and a bibliography of works cited with your final product. **Sample interview questions for Keyes:**
A. Why did you use the allusion to Adam and Eve? What does it mean, and how did you expect it to go along with and enhance your story?
B. You wrote the story “Flowers for Algernon” that became the movie *Charly.* When you first saw the movie, what liberties did you notice the director and actors take? Do you agree or disagree with the changes? What was most important for them to keep the same, staying faithful to the original? |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Notes</th>
<th>CCSS Reading Alignment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| (Rubric not provided) This interview could be written and/or performed (live/video) by pairs or groups. Students could use notecards or cue cards in order to cite direct quotes. **Movie viewing guide questions (see Appendix for formatted handout)** After watching the movie, choose five most significant elements—both changes and things that stayed the same—and think critically about each one.  
- **Identify Element** that was changed or kept the same  
- **Rank Importance** 1=Most important, 2=Important, 3=Somewhat important  
- **Associate Effect** of this decision on the reader’s experience of the story. Wise decision? Foolish mistake?  
- **Evaluate/ Judge:** Does this decision increase understanding and enjoyment of the movie? Why or why not?  |
| R8.1Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.  
R8.7L 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.  
8.9L 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. Other Standards Addressed: S/L 8.4, 8.6 (if performed); W 8.1a-c, 8.9, 8.9a |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Allusions study guide questions: (see Appendix for formatted handout)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Quote:** Copy down the lines that contain an allusion.  
**Source:** Identify the outside work is being referenced.  
**Explanation:** What is being suggested by the allusion? (How does the author connect or transform the source text?)  
**Purpose:** What deeper meaning is brought into the story by using this allusion? Or what feeling or mood is created? |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Prompt</th>
<th>Instructional Notes</th>
<th>CCSS Reading Alignment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Task 2: Argument on the Use of Intelligence Tests (Texts 4-5, Informational reading standards) | (*Instructors should differentiate this task according to group abilities.) **Student Prompt:** How does – or should – society measure people’s intelligence? Some people consider the SAT test to be a sort of IQ test. Should colleges use the SAT score as the most important item to consider in college applications?  
You have just been hired as a college admissions counselor, and your job is to decide whom to let into your school. Prepare/outline an argument for your coworkers, making a case for what importance to put on the SAT score. Use evidence from the video and the article as support for your argument.  
Next, decide whether this argument would be best presented as a written report, a video, a website, or another medium. Attach a paragraph describing your presentation plan and reflecting about why that genre would be best for your information. | (Rubric not provided)  
Students could stop at simply outlining the argument and justifying the medium, or could go on and complete the task in their medium of choice (or, if desired by the instructor, all students could write this as a formal essay, and the final reflection question could be done separately). | CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.7 Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.  
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.8 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.  
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.9 Analyze a case in which two or more texts provide conflicting information on the same topic and identify where the texts disagree on matters of fact or interpretation.  
Other Standards Addressed: W8.1a-e, 8.4, 8.5, 8.9b |
This text set is presented as a separate option for a teacher who desires to briefly address all the same standards as the complete unit; this set and its accompanying two performance tasks integrate the topics succinctly. Students are not given multiple opportunities for success on each standard, but would have an introduction to the standards and authentic performance tasks to synthesize the information. If a teacher prefers not to spend an extended time on this anchor text or these standards at this point in the year, the abbreviated text set may be the preferred path.

**Analysis – Connections to Literature Review**

Based on the literature review, the following items were recommended research-based instructional techniques to build intertextual reading skills. The table notes lessons that drew upon these techniques. The lesson numbers refer to the Suggested Sequence for Reading and Instruction, Appendix A.
Table 15

**Instructional Techniques Planned and Incorporated**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technique/ Strategy/ Goal</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Providing authentic, engaging questions and tasks from the beginning as a focus for reading; activating student interest by provoking their questions</td>
<td>Text questions in preparation for Socratic Seminars, from lessons 2, 9, 13, 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing students a “lens” or focus for reading, such as characterization, themes, etc.</td>
<td>Many lessons note Student Reading Focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activating prior knowledge for new subjects</td>
<td>Lesson 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explicit vocabulary instruction</td>
<td>Not noted in lesson plans, but vocabulary list is Appendix E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explicit strategy instruction and coaching; metacognitive reflection tasks:</td>
<td>Lessons 2, 3, 6 – reading and annotating techniques, lesson 5 argument, lesson 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How to read closely, esp. noting linguistic features (syntax, language patterns, repetition) and structure of a text</td>
<td>Performance Task planning for each task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Awareness of self and text: how to know when to do close reading, when to reread, when to read “good enough” and get the gist</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Noting/posting patterns or main ideas from one text or part of the text, and using the pattern to understand other texts; categorizing; finding common ideas among texts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How to plan tasks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mapping (making a graphical representation of the structure of the text and of the synthesis)</td>
<td>lesson 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing graphic organizers or reading/viewing guides to assist and teach pattern recognition, comparison, organization</td>
<td>lesson 5, Allusions organizer, Movie viewing guide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructor demonstrating think-aloud of reading; student think-alouds to a partner</td>
<td>lesson 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answering macro-level questions or writing a summary before moving on to next text</td>
<td>each text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intertextual reflection questions, such as Lenski’s Directed Question Technique (relate story to school, self, life)</td>
<td>lesson 3, 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion (especially peer-led discussions such as Socratic Seminars to get students to revise thinking or reinforce argument with evidence); students taking on role of discussion leaders</td>
<td>lessons 2, 9, 13, 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metacognitive talk reflecting on students’ own learning</td>
<td>lessons 2, 4, 6; post-performance task reflections</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Assessment of the Unit/ Feedback From Colleagues

The curriculum coordinator from my school district offered a rubric with the following items:

Rubric for Lessons and Rubrics

INDICATORS

I. Alignment to the Depth of the CCSS
☑ Targets a set of grade level ELA/Literacy Standards
☑ Includes a clear and explicit purpose for instruction
☑ Selects texts within the grade level text complexity band of sufficient quality.

II. Key Shifts in the CCSS
☑ Reading Text Closely: Makes reading texts closely, examining textual evidence and discerning deep meaning a central focus of instruction.
☑ Text Based Evidence: Makes rich and rigorous evidence based discussions and writing about common text through a sequence of specific, thought provoking and text dependent questions.
☑ Writing from Sources: Routinely expects that students draw from texts to produce clear and coherent writing that informs, explains or argues (Notes, summaries, short responses or essays.)

III. Instructional Supports
☑ Cultivates student interest and engagement in reading, writing and speaking about texts.
☑ Provides ALL students with multiple opportunities to engage with text, with scaffolding.
☑ Focuses on challenging sections of text and engages students in a productive struggle through discussion questions and that build toward independence.
☑ Integrates supports in reading, writing, listening and speaking for students who are EL, have disabilities or read below grade level.
☑ Provides extensions and/or more advanced texts for students who read well above grade level

Assessment
☑ Elicits direct, observable evidence of the degree that students can independently demonstrate mastery of the major standards.
☑ Assesses student proficiency using methods that are unbiased and accessible to all students.
☑ Includes aligned rubrics that provide sufficient guidance for interpreting student performance.

Based on these items, she offered some feedback on the content and structure of the unit.

The unit scored well, rating on a three-point scale with threes and a few twos. The unit was described as thorough and complete, and overall very well done. The connections to Dweck’s work on growth mindset was especially appreciated for its
contemporary relevance and good fit with the story’s themes.

To improve the second item, clarifying the purpose for instruction, and to improve usability by other teachers, the reviewer suggested that text set A be the focus of the unit. She recommended that the other sets separated out or eliminated, to streamline and strengthen a single focus in the unit.

She further suggested that the Enduring Understanding listed as number four, “The brain is malleable and can be improved through hard work and determined practice,” could branch out to an essential question considering how current brain research would change the story if written today. This could lead to several performance tasks, including narrative, informative, or argumentative, but using the results of research and text-based questions.

Finally she recommended narrowing the focus in terms of standards, to no more than five focus standards, which would be another natural result of paring down the scope of the unit.

The department chair, who is also a curriculum committee member, evaluated the unit. He was asked to give informal formative feedback on usability and scope. He also used as a guideline the “Revised Publishers’ Criteria for the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts and Literacy, Grades 3–12” (Coleman & Pimentel, 2012).

Based on these items, the feedback on this unit was very positive. The reviewer approved the choice of anchor text as one that is thought-provoking and appropriate for the age group. He also appreciated the format of several distinct text sets, each with a
specific focus, noting that this allows the teacher to focus tightly on one area at a time without extraneous distractions. He agreed that the texts selected were appropriate in length, balance of types, quality, and complexity (based on the range of Lexiles of 700-1500, and the complex themes and structures of the texts). He noted the strength of the multimedia focus of the unit.

He rated the tasks and questions as closely text-dependent and likely to help students to compare and integrate multiple sources. However, he suggested that for further development, a few more smaller-scale text-based questions could be included earlier on, to keep interest high and allow for demonstration of understanding. These would help students build to the thought-provoking questions at the end. Similarly, he suggested describing a few formative assessments for teachers to check understanding along the way, in preparation for the final summative assessments.

Other items on the rubric that he noted could be expanded were adding a narrative writing option; including vocabulary resources for the supplementary texts, rather than just the anchor text; and including more depth of student inquiry/research.

Overall, the reviewer evaluated the unit as a strongly written, useful unit, likely to encourage substantive discussions from students, and to support student inference, fluency, and mastery of language.

The final chapter will reflect on the researcher’s learnings, limitations and implications from the research, and future research needs.
CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

Overview

This research project addressed the question: *How can I design a curriculum unit that uses a text set to teach middle school English students to integrate knowledge and ideas as indicated by the Common Core State Standards?* I will answer the question and reflect on the major learning from undertaking this research, address the limitations and implications of my study, and make recommendations for future research. This project will conclude by discussing how it can help support the educational community in constructing knowledge that will benefit all learners.

Reflections on Learning

This project presented me with the opportunity to step back from the hurried pace of concurrent teaching and curriculum planning, to take time to consider the task of curriculum planning in more depth and deliberation. As a result, I was able to purposefully and successfully develop a unit for eighth grade English students to address all components of Common Core State Standards 7-9, with the goal of improving their skills in integrating knowledge and ideas. I was able to look more closely at the relationship between the standards and the resulting curriculum. I also learned the value of considering both the anchor and grade-level standards when selecting the scope of the unit.

The writing of this unit confirmed the value of teachers writing a unit. In addition
to the idea that teachers are the best experts for choosing materials to engage students’ interest and understanding (NCTE, 2012), I found that my own understanding of the standards and goals was heightened by my sustained engagement with the task of writing the curriculum. Compared to when I began, I feel more confident and committed to ensuring that my students learn the thinking skills of synthesis and intertextual connection.

One of the main understandings from the development of this unit was the benefit of clarifying a very specific focus for students’ learning within the context of the academic year. The anchor text selected for this unit is a complex, relevant piece of literature that offers itself easily to many thematic and standards-based approaches. In building background by reading others’ curriculum units and in creating my own, the ideas for themes and approaches to the unit were broadened rather than narrowed, a confirmation of Barnett and Fay’s findings (2013) about the effect of an overwhelming volume of resources. The short story “Flowers for Algernon” (1959) is a model text that lends itself easily to a focus on a range of themes and topics: knowledge, identity, intelligence measures, scientific ethics, self-acceptance, mental impairment, estrangement and being an outsider, or unreliable narrators. Each one of these has potential for student engagement and mastery of standards.

This led to the insight that trying to address every level of multiple standards completely in a unit, or trying to find one perfect focus, can be paralyzing. I spent increased time deliberating on the desired focus theme for the unit, trying various possibilities and combinations. To address this difficulty, it became clear that it is
necessary to be aware not just of the unit and goals alone, but to consider their context in the scope and sequence of the academic year. This learning is important because many teacher-created units that are shared online are presented in isolation, without consideration for what was learned by students before and after the unit. I now see a greater need for an intentional yearlong sequence that builds intertextual reading and thinking skills more strategically and sequentially.

The unit plan then became much more focused when I situated the unit in the fall. The topic of learning, intelligence and brain development has the benefit of building student confidence, through their increased understanding of their brain’s unique strengths, as well as of the importance of grit and effort – and even failure – in order to succeed and learn. Students can develop their metacognition through the readings and performance tasks given, an aspect that will be an advantage throughout the remainder of the year. Once the unit is established within the sequence in the year, the unit can also incorporate instructional strategies most appropriate to support students who are engaging in a text set for the first time in the year, such as teaching annotation and Socratic Seminars.

Alternative foci on bullying and disabilities, identity and being an outsider, or scientific ethics are also potentially rich text set units, valuable and thought-provoking for student reflection and investigation. Though they were not part of the resulting unit, other texts on these topics, uncovered by my research, remain in my personal file as possibilities for student extension and enrichment if the unit needs to be revised or expanded in the future.
Another difficulty was keeping a focus on all three of the Common Core reading standards on Integration of Knowledge and Ideas at one time:

7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

8. Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.

9. Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010, p. 35).

To summarize, these standards ask students to harmonize and judge the messages of different multimedia texts, compare/contrast, and deconstruct/judge an argument’s logic and evidence. As general goals, at first reading, these have the possibility of working together in a cohesive way as one compact unit. However, once planning began, I had to acknowledge the need to examine the specific eighth grade level Common Core standards. The more specific standards are more disparate and less easy to integrate with each other, especially with separate standards for informational and literary texts, as seen in the following table:
## Table 16

### Grade 8 CCSS Literacy and Informational Reading Standards 7-9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literature Reading Standard</th>
<th>Informational Reading Standard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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.8.8 not applicable to literature)</td>
<td>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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.</td>
<td>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.9 Analyze a case in which two or more texts provide conflicting information on the same topic and identify where the texts disagree on matters of fact or interpretation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To summarize, students are specifically asked to consider: “Why does a movie director or actor choose to change things from the original?”; “What is the benefit of using one medium instead of another?”; “Compare a story to a myth/legend/Biblical source/pattern”; “Compare two disagreeing texts on one topic, and figure out how and why they disagree.” The specificity of these milestones makes it necessary to provide more than one task for students to demonstrate proficiency. To address multiple specific standards well, the curriculum designer must re-envision and expand the unit from its most concise form in order to go in-depth.

My key realization was the importance of balancing two sets of standards while planning instruction. The grade level substandard is a valid benchmark to address
student’s learning. However, it is only valuable if it is part of a continuous, cohesive instructional plan for the year, focusing on the anchor standards as the main goal for students’ ultimate learning. There is power in vertical alignment of standards (distributing tasks and substandards to different grade levels) when teachers take responsibility for faithfully addressing the new aspects presented at each level. There is even more power, though, in teachers at all levels taking responsibility for the ultimate goal of student proficiency.

The resulting recommendation is that teachers make every attempt to revisit the standards throughout the year by incorporating multiple intertextual experiences. Sometimes the tasks should address the specific grade level’s substandards, but those tasks should be balanced with diverse other tasks that challenge students to address the anchor standards in different ways.

Another realization was that with a long enough anchor text, it may be appropriate to have more than one text set, each with separate essential questions and performance tasks. In the unit presented in this project, I also offered an option combining the grade level standards in a very small text set, as a way for a teacher to introduce several intertextual standards to students. However, I found the stronger approach to be a more in-depth study of these standards, with more opportunities for students to practice reading certain text types. This closely aligns with the instructional shifts of giving regular practice with complex texts, and balancing informational and literary texts (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2014c, para. 3-12). The result is four shorter text sets. An educator may
consider these as four small separate units, all supported by one anchor text. They work together wonderfully in combination, giving students a solid foundation for intertextual thinking through multimedia reading. The integrated combination of all four sets is the recommended approach.

In evaluating text complexity, I realized the limits of the quantitative measuring tool, Lexile measure (Metametrics, 2015). For example, in evaluating the play *Pygmalion*, deleting the names of the speakers in the play script format resulted in a significant change in the Lexile score. I thus recognized the need for increased reliance on the qualitative judgments of instructors in determining text levels’ appropriateness. This agrees with the recommendations of the CCSS Appendix A (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010), in balancing qualitative, quantitative and task measures for a text’s complexity. Numbers seem so nicely objective and exact, but they are in no way a definite measure of readability. It is significant for all educators to experience this firsthand and put less trust in the computers’ numbers.

Composing a multimedia text unit with varied text types was a goal emphasized by Strop and Carlson (2010). The resulting unit in this project does contain a wide variety of genres, and includes both written (stories, articles, poems) and performed text (film, video lectures). However, this unit does not include a specific lesson on the auditory, gestural and spatial domains available for observation in a film. This would be a good lesson plan or instructional strategy to document for the unit, in order to balance the literary “readings” with that of other semiotic systems. I also have yet to find any great
photographs to support the visual aspect beyond the films. Still, the balance of different types of literary texts offers both variety and repetition for the sake of practice. Also, by building awareness of all the potential text types from the beginning of the year, both I and my students can have a yearlong conversation about “reading the world,” not just words on the page.

The tasks in this unit, with multiple opportunities to argue or inform based on several texts together, offer many opportunities for the instruction of synthesis writing, supporting Segev-Miller’s (2004) recommendation to start this instruction as early as possible and offer support. Various “graphic organizers, reading/viewing guides, and questioning strategies” (Strop and Carlson, 2010, p. 28) are planned and provided in the appendices. While the goal is that ultimately students will not need these and can read complex texts with a minimum of scaffolding (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2014a), these structural aides are important in teaching the type of thinking desired.

For the arrangement of texts in the unit, several different arrangements were appropriate based on the texts and the tasks (Hartman & Allison, 1996). I found that the specific grade-level standards seemed to favor conflicting and synoptic arrangements, though the anchor standards are also well-supported by the other arrangements (complementary, controlling, dialogic). By incorporating several small text sets in the unit, students are able to gain familiarity with several patterns of text arrangement. Explicit study and discussion of these will be a helpful technique to teach students to recognize patterns and apply them.
The idea of student choice in texts is an important one (Lehman, Roberts & Miller, 2014). Due to the wide array of texts studied together, this unit allows students to choose which texts they wish to use in the performance tasks, thus offering some degree of independent choice. Increased self-reliance for student choice in readings would be a goal for later in the year, through further training in student research, and through selection among multiple teacher-prepared materials.

**Implications**

The results of this project suggest that a text set can be a powerful and robust way to inspire a relevant unit for intertextual thinking. Effective text set units can be designed by focusing on a few standards, keeping in mind the yearlong scope and sequence, composing engaging essential questions and authentic performance tasks, being aware of text complexity and variety, and recommending different instructional strategies. These results have implications for students, teachers, curriculum writers, and administrators.

Students may benefit from this project through the important practice in intertextual thinking, speaking and writing they receive when teachers implement the unit. They will create a solid foundation for encountering and integrating ideas from more difficult texts in high school, college, and life. Having spent the time to design this unit, I am now highly aware of the goals and strategies for intertextual thinking. My students will inevitably experience a greater number of lessons that incorporate these strategies, as well as a more organized progression of these lessons within the organization of the year’s curriculum.

Teachers may benefit from this research by using text set as written. In teaching
the unit, they will become more familiar with its design and goals, and in considering this exemplar, they will be better equipped to write their own such unit in the future. They then become curriculum writers, which is a potential benefit to the continued relevance and currency of their teaching and the depth of their understanding.

Curriculum writers may benefit by applying the observations within this chapter by offering suggestions of yearlong sequences of integrated units or instructional techniques rather than isolated units. They may also benefit from the example of the variety of multimedia components in this unit. Finally, they may recognize the need and opportunity to further develop student skills in the area of Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, combining the standards with relevant, authentic Essential Questions.

Administrators may recognize the need for professional development in the area of intertextual thinking and provide such with the clear goal of adapting and preparing lessons on this topic. Peer-coaching would be a valuable resource to teachers who have limited experience with organizing text sets, or with the strategies that support integration of knowledge (such as the Socratic seminar). Release time to observe other teachers implementing the strategies would be an effective way to communicate the knowledge.

Limitations and Future Research Recommendations

This study focused on the development of the curricular unit. While several colleagues gave feedback, the real test of a unit is in its use. I plan to implement the unit in September-October of the coming school year. Through the web-based professional learning community resource databases, it will be a straightforward task to revise and add to the unit based on actual results with students.
This study was supported by one anchor text, and focused on one part of the academic year. In order to recognize further effects of the unit, it would be beneficial to complete a yearlong plan addressing these intertextual integrative standards, and to incorporate pre-assessments and post-assessments for the beginning and end of the year to document student growth. Including more lessons would expand the capabilities of instructors to plan their teaching strategies long-term.

Other classic anchor texts that are strong choices for eighth grade literary text set development include Edgar Allen Poe’s 1847 story “The Tell-Tale Heart” (in Beers, Warriner, & Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, inc., 2003), *The Diary of Anne Frank* (Goodrich, Hackett & Frank, 2003), *My Brother Sam is Dead* (1974) by James Lincoln Collier and Christopher Collier, and Martin Luther King, Jr.’s 1963 “I Have a Dream” speech (in Beers, Warriner, & Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, inc., 2003). Other long-term thematic units that would tie into the history curriculum would be examining the idea of identity, including cultural, linguistic, national, and specifically American identity; and a continued exploration of how society treats those it considers different or outsiders. Both of these themes are relatable for adolescents’ egocentric interests but also integrate an exploration of experiences and stories different from their own. The second is specifically an extension of the themes developed in this unit on “Flowers for Algernon” (1959).

Further development of this project includes writing complete daily lesson plans fully describing the instructional strategies suggested in the outline. An index or compendium of instructional strategies supporting intertextual thinking would also be a valuable resource, a ready companion to any text set addressing these standards. I hope to
work toward such a resource to share with my colleagues; perhaps a Wiki or other online collaboration will be possible.

A limitation of this study exists in the fact that it was created by one teacher/writer working alone. Some might argue: “To get something done a committee should consist of no more than three people, two of whom are absent” (Robert Copeland, as cited in Lloyd & Mitchison, 2009). However, collaboration is a powerful means to leverage many people’s strengths and intelligence to create something better than any one individual could create alone. It also helps to limit blind spots and biases that are implicit in any research. Reviews and continued feedback from other practitioners are critical to verify this research. Furthermore, my perspective is limited to the application of this unit to one context, one group of students and one school site. Others in different contexts will bring different expectations of student abilities, site norms, and instructional strategies.

I believe creating opportunities for intertextual thinking in the classroom will become increasingly important to educators. Therefore, it is vital that more research be done into the best ways to train educators in strategies to both plan curriculum and to instruct students in integrating texts.

**Communicating Results, and Relevance to the Educational Community**

Concurrently with the submittal of this project, this text set unit will be shared via my teaching site’s intranet site as well as through my personal teaching website. I will encourage feedback from my site-based professional learning community as well as from a wider audience for future revisions.
I hope to organize a seminar on writing text-set based units, to be shared with my colleagues at my site at a future professional development opportunity, and perhaps with a wider teacher audience in the future.

My personal experiences are relevant as far as I share them with others. As for the wider educational community, my unit will join a myriad of others available to teachers, who will benefit from my thinking if they choose to use this unit. I hope that they will use this as a model and inspiration for creating their own units. Each individual teacher who is serious about teaching students to develop 21st century thinking skills will need to become familiar in the planning and teaching of units that help students integrate knowledge and ideas.

**Final Reflection**

In the future, I plan to incorporate text sets with coordinating writing and discussion tasks into every anchor text I plan to read with my students. The experience has reminded me of the importance of beginning with the end skill in mind. I also have a renewed focus on planning instructional strategies to help students demonstrate integrative thinking and synthesis. I expect the result to be a more cohesive yearlong plan, both in thematic tie-ins and in the growing independence of my students through my scaffolding.

Investigating literature, the Common Core State Standards, intertextual thinking, and text sets has convinced me of the importance of intertextual thinking and connection-building for middle school students. Even in the very task of composing a literature review about intertextual thinking, I felt I was looking in a mirror, writing a literature
review about (ironically) how hard it is to do tasks like write literature reviews. All students need these skills, for high school, college, graduate school, and real life as intertextual thinkers in a data-rich world.

For my students and for others touched by this work, my design of a text-set based unit set to teach middle school English students to integrate knowledge and ideas as indicated by the Common Core State Standards is one small step in improving the literacy potential of the next generation.
APPENDIX A
Suggested Sequence for Reading and Instruction
## Suggested Sequence for Reading and Instruction

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Lesson</th>
<th>Text Set</th>
<th>GENRE: Text Title</th>
<th>Function of text or lesson in unit</th>
<th>Sequencing Note</th>
<th>Suggested Instructional Strategies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Introduce genres/media and have students investigate how to break code in each type of reading</td>
<td>Before beginning readings. This could be done earlier in the year.</td>
<td>- Small group inquiry/investigations: demonstrate how reading strategies and purposes change based on genre, and assign each group to prepare a reading guide for the rest of the class based on a genre that will be part of this unit.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SHORT STORY: “Raymond’s Run”</td>
<td>Introduce theme of respecting all abilities, build practice in self-monitoring reading skills</td>
<td>Use before beginning anchor text. May be an entire separate mini-unit…</td>
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If this text is used, consider introducing the Allusions lesson and chart here – there are a few good allusions in this story.

- “Click or Clunk” reading metacognition and fix-up strategies
- Provide frame for summarizing a narrative – “Somebody Wanted But So Then”
- Citing text evidence in answering questions using RACE acronym: Restate, Answer, Cite, Explain
- Discuss the idea of dialect/slang to establish place and time, character (this comes back in “Flowers”)

Socratic Seminar 1:
(Multiple questions may be given for student preparation; choose one for opening question or let student interest lead discussion)
For each question, always explain WHY? and WHAT PROOF DO YOU HAVE FROM THE TEXT?
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| 3      | A        | LIST ARTICLE:           | Introduce topic of brain and learning; review annotation; introduce idea of intertextual connections | This article could really go anywhere, but the annotation and connection skills should be taught up front. | 1. Would you label Squeaky’s view of herself confidence (something admirable) or arrogance (something shameful)? Or something else?  
2. What are Squeaky’s other character traits? Which is most important in understanding her? Which is most admirable, and which is least?  
3. What does Squeaky believe about girls and friendship? How does this change after the race?  
4. Squeaky’s teacher implied that there is a time to lose on purpose. What would be the circumstances where it might be right to do so? Reread Squeaky’s statement, “People are stupid sometimes,” in the context of the story. What does she really mean? Phrase it in a more specific and sophisticated way. What theme in the story is suggested by this idea? Where else do you see it in the story?  
• Student focusing lens: main ideas, making connections.  
• Annotation (demo and practice)  
• Directed Question Technique: Questions about the text, across texts, and beyond the text: After reading, students... |
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</table>
| 4      | Anchor   | NOVELLA: “Flowers for Algernon” (Progress Reports 1-3) | (practice with annotation, finding the gist, click or clunk, summarizing, offering students the opportunity to struggle through this independently, with | | • Cold read and annotation of text, with the focus of finding out about the character and exposition of the plot.  
• Student-led discussion to understand |
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<td></td>
<td>citing evidence for inferences)</td>
<td>minimal background, is an engaging and fruitful activity. Highly recommend not prepping them very much, not reading the intro material in the textbook.</td>
<td>text and find the gist</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>ARTICLE: “What’s in an Inkblot? Some say, Not Much”</td>
<td>Build background on inkblots (featured in story). Practice arguing a side and citing evidence.</td>
<td>Inkblot research corresponds with March 6th entry in anchor text</td>
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<td>• Student focus: understand ideas and compare to anchor text.</td>
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<td>• Think-aloud and annotation of text</td>
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<td>• Venn Diagram or Double Bubble map</td>
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<td>• Argumentative essay organizer, talk about how to organize ideas for an argument, plan counterclaims and warrants, etc.</td>
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<td>• Debate or write about implications for the anchor text: Was the Rorschach test a good way to determine if Charlie should be a candidate for the surgery? Why or why not?</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Anchor</td>
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<td>Practice with different media (video lectures)</td>
<td>These texts may take several days to read, but are all helpful in building background before proceeding too much further.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A</td>
<td>ESSAY: “In a Nutshell”</td>
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<td>• Student focus: What is it saying and how is it saying that?</td>
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<td>VIDEO – Beyond Wit &amp; Grit: Howard Gardner's '8 for 8'</td>
<td>Expand background knowledge about IQ</td>
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<td>• It Says/ I say</td>
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<td>TED TALK VIDEO</td>
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<td>• Annotating details (articles): Chunking text. Left margin – what is the author saying? Right margin – what is the</td>
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| 7      | Anchor B | NOVELLA: “Flowers for Algernon” March 19 – April 20 (PR 7-10) | Introduce allusions, how to analyze. Examine irony. | References to Robinson Crusoe are in 4/9 and 4/19 of anchor text | • Student reading focus: deeper meaning through language choices  
• Allusions examples and analysis chart/graphic organizer  
• **Performance Task B** – part 1 – Writing about an allusion – sample paragraph response, done as a class |
| 8      | Anchor A | NOVELLA: “Flowers for Algernon” April 21 | Students read two articles reporting on the same research, and compare them to each other and | These two articles can also be saved for a later cold read assessment, as part of a final exam – or | • (remind students of Venn Diagram or Double bubble map)  
• **Cold Read Assessment** prompt: comparing two articles, comparing to the anchor text |
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Anchor B</td>
<td>• ARTICLE: “IQ tests are 'meaningless and too simplistic' claim researchers”</td>
<td>apply them to the anchor text.</td>
<td>may be done now, as a midpoint assessment and continuation of the text set.</td>
<td>• Students may be instructed to annotate texts with purpose of preparing for the writing topic</td>
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<td>• NOVELLA: “Flowers for Algernon” April 22-April 30 (finish Progress Report 11, start 12)</td>
<td>(practice analyzing allusions)</td>
<td>Genesis reference in April 30 section of anchor text. (Paradise Lost reference is not until later [see lesson 11], but if desired that text could also go here since it is based on Genesis.)</td>
<td>Allusions analysis chart</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Genesis 3 – NIV</td>
<td>Reading a mythological text</td>
<td>Discussing part 1 in depth</td>
<td>Socratic Seminar #2- Sample questions (Multiple questions may be given for student preparation; choose one for opening question or let student interest lead discussion) For each question, always explain WHY? and WHAT PROOF DO YOU HAVE FROM THE TEXT?</td>
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<td>• How is what is happening to Charlie related to the Bible verse that Fanny compares it to? What part in the classic story would be played by Charlie? The doctors? The surgery? The garden? What corresponds and what does not?</td>
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<td>• Compare the intelligence Charlie has with the knowledge alluded to in the classic story. Are they the same? Explain.</td>
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<td>• What effect does the author’s allusion to</td>
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| 10     | Anchor D | NOVELLA: “Flowers for Algernon” May 15-May 20th (finish PR 12) | Lesson in reading a (contemporary) poem | Poem’s theme ties in with May 20 entry in anchor text | - Annotate poem  
- Close-read and annotate May 20th entry through lens of theme  
- Summarize/ write about poem and its connections  
- Compare an entry from this section to the beginning of the story, using one quantitative linguistic measure of your |
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| 11     | D        | WEBSITE: “Disability Etiquette” | Students will learn how to refer to and treat people with disabilities. | This lesson fits well after the 5/20 progress report entry, as Charlie reflects on why people treat differently abled people so badly. However, it could also come at the end as a wrap-up, especially if doing Performance Task D. | • Directed Questioning Technique (again)  
• **Performance Task D** (discussion questions valuable even if performance task is not assigned at this point in the year). |
|        |          | POEM: “Only One Me” | | | |
| 12     | Anchor B | NOVELLA: “Flowers for Algernon” May 23-June 15 | (practice analyzing allusions; Lesson in reading a (classic) poem) This is the climax of the story – the downturn. | (Paradise Lost reference in June 15th entry in anchor text) | • Student think-alouds when reading 6/4 and 6/5 entries (letter to doctor, explanation).  
• Predicting the end, cause and effect  
• Ask students to connect this turning point to other stories or to life. |
<p>|        |          | POEM: “Paradise Lost” (possibly Honors or advanced readers only) | | | |
| 13     |          | NOVELLA: “Flowers for Algernon” June 19-July 28(end) | | | • Comparison questions, especially focusing on plot and theme: what about the falling action mirrors the rising action, the first part of the book? What is different? What theme does the |</p>
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| 14     |          |                   |                                   |                | **Socratic Seminar #3 - Sample questions**  
**Multiple questions may be given for student preparation; choose one for opening question or let student interest lead discussion**  
For each question, always explain WHY? and WHAT PROOF DO YOU HAVE FROM THE TEXT?  
1. Charlie states: “No one I’ve ever known is what he appears to be on the surface”? How is this reflected in his experiences throughout the story? Is he correct, or is he overgeneralizing? How does this apply to himself?  
2. Analyze the change in the way Frank and Joe act around Charlie. Why do you think they are different? Has their character changed? Would you recommend that Charlie accept them as friends?  
3. Critique Charlie’s statement that, “It’s easy to make friends if you let people laugh at you.” Is this a useful lesson, or a cop-out? Why?  
4. Is Charlie better off now, or would he have been better off if he had never had the operation? (revisiting question). |
15  N/A  • MYTH/VIDEO: Icarus;  
    • MYTH: Pandora’s Box  
    • *Optional lesson – Aristotle’s Poetics: Tragedies (excerpts or summaries)  

Corresponding themes helps students see theme in anchor text
Aristotle – this is an additional pattern/allusion tie-in, good extension for honors.

(Themes tie in with the downfall in the end of the story; Icarus can be done before the end, 
Pandora should be done after the end so that the final entry’s message of hope and optimism is

Allusions analysis chart/graphic organizer:
• **Quote**: Copy down the lines that contain an allusion.
• **Source**: What outside work is being referenced?
• **Explanation**: What is being suggested by the allusion? (How does the author connect or transform the source text?)
• **Purpose**: What deeper meaning is brought into the story by using this allusion? Or what feeling or mood is created?

Why? Another way of thinking about this - Is knowledge a blessing or a curse in the experience of Charlie Gordon? What about in other situations and contexts?

5. Does Keyes intend this as a hopeful ending, or a cautionary tale? Explain your interpretation.

6. What is the most important theme that comes from this story? Where do you see that supported, and why is it the most important?

7. Based on Charlie’s experience, should people today use “human engineering,” or the process of making people artificially more intelligent, or not? What kinds of artificial intelligence-boosting do people use today? What are the problems or risks?
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>• *Optional lesson - MEMOIR: “Algernon, Charlie and I” - Daniel Keyes.</td>
<td>Allows students to reflect on the plot decisions and revisions a writer must make, and the effect of tragic versus happy endings.</td>
<td>This is a reflection on writing/revising that can be done anytime after the end, including later as part of a narrative or fiction writing lesson.</td>
<td>Students respond to the memoir by summarizing Keyes’ motivation for his decisions about the ending of the story, and arguing whether he was correct or whether his original publisher (who wanted a happy ending) was wiser.</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>• VIDEO: <em>Charly</em> or <em>Flowers for Algernon</em>; MOVIE REVIEWS: “Flowers' wilts in light of modern day” “Stop and watch 'Flowers'” OR “Movie Review: <em>Charly</em>” –Ebert; “Movie Review: <em>Charly</em>” –Canby</td>
<td>Genre lesson: elements/vocabulary of film Genre lesson: elements of a movie review Noticing and comparing effective or ineffective decisions on the part of the actors or directors Comparing reviews Writing and</td>
<td>If this text set is being used alone, the movie clips could be interspersed with the anchor text and placed after reading the scenes. If other texts are being used during reading, the movies should be at the end to keep the story streamlined and simple while reading.</td>
<td>Socratic Seminar 4 <em>(Multiple questions may be given for student preparation; choose one for opening question or let student interest lead discussion)</em> For each question, always explain WHY? and WHAT PROOF DO YOU HAVE FROM THE TEXT? Use your Movie Adaptation Viewing Guide and notes from the movie to form judgments about the director’s and actors’ decisions in adapting the movie. • Overall question: Was this a successful adaptation? • Genre considerations: What changes were really necessary when changing from a written text to the movie?</td>
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<td>Lesson Text Set</td>
<td>GENRE: Text Title</td>
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<td>supporting a review</td>
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<td>Why? What worked in the text that would not have worked on screen? What needed to be added to make the movie version work?</td>
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<td>• Subquestions:</td>
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<td>How did certain scenes and changes affect the story? What added to the story, and what took away from it, and why? Why might the screenwriter/director have done this?</td>
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<td>What scenes were the most powerful when you read them? What were the most powerful when you watched them? Why?</td>
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<td>Specific scenes/aspects to consider:</td>
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<td>• The relationship between Charlie and Miss Kinnian</td>
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<td>• The scene between Charlie and his mother</td>
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<td>• Changing the work setting from a box factory to a bakery</td>
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<td>• The characters of Frank and Joe</td>
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<td>• The scene at the bar, dancing with girls</td>
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<td>Be prepared to discuss any other scenes, character decisions, or changes that stood out to you.</td>
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<td><strong>Performance Task C:</strong> Writing about movies, comparing reviews (Provide Movie Adaptation Viewing Guide)</td>
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APPENDIX B
Performance Tasks A, B, C with Rubrics
Performance Task A – Intelligence and the Brain

Student Prompt
Informational Writing/Speaking Performance Task-
“What can you control about your brain? Why and how should you do so? How can it make a difference in your life?” After finding out the answers to these questions, use the information to motivate and inspire other students at our school.

Over the next two weeks, you will have the chance to read articles about the brain and learning, and you can do additional research too.

Goal:
Working with two other students, create an informational and inspirational speech/presentation or motivational video about intelligence and learning. Prepare to present this to a small group of seventh graders, take questions, and facilitate a short discussion. Select facts from the readings and research you’ve done, and explain the impact of these ideas. Predict your audience’s misunderstandings and concerns, and try to address them. Use a positive, balanced tone and language that will help the students understand your ideas and stay motivated to keep trying and learning as they continue through middle school and beyond.
## Rubric – Performance Task A – Intelligence and the Brain

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<tr>
<td>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.1a 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.</td>
<td>Student works effectively with a group, coming well prepared with reading and assigned tasks done. Contributes to discussions by referring back to evidence from reading and asking thoughtful questions. Helps the group have profitable discussions, make good decisions, keep on track, get things done on time, split up roles, and keep each other accountable.</td>
<td>Works with a group Usually prepared Contributes to discussions by on-topic responses Mostly follows rules of group to help them make progress</td>
<td>Some problems working with groups Not prepared enough to be a good help Sometimes off-topic or superficial answers Sometimes needs help following rules</td>
<td>Not ready for discussions Causes problems in group Goes off-topic Doesn’t follow rules or meet deadlines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.1b Follow rules for collegial discussions and decision-making, track progress toward specific goals and deadlines, and define individual roles as needed.</td>
<td>Presentation is organized, focused and clear, with logical arguments that flow together. Presenter uses good eye contact and is easy to hear and understand. Presentation tone is balanced (serious but relatable, using humor and personal/ concrete examples to draw in teen audience)</td>
<td>Presentation is organized and understandable, with arguments that make sense. Presenter uses eye contact and can be heard. Tone is appropriate.</td>
<td>Presentation has some organizational issues, but mostly goes together. Presenter may have trouble being heard or understood at times, or may be overly formal or casual.</td>
<td>Presentation is not focused; evidence is off-topic or doesn’t make sense. Presenter may look down/away or be difficult to hear/understand. Not appropriate tone.</td>
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<td>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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.</td>
<td>Presentation starts with a strong introduction that sets up situation and claim, develops several well-organized points with evidence and explanations, and brings it all together well at the end, making meaning for the audience.</td>
<td>Presentation has a beginning, middle and end. Reasons are organized well. Ending feels planned and final.</td>
<td>One or more sections may be weak. Reasons are somewhat organized. Ending may feel underdeveloped.</td>
<td>One or more sections may be missing. Reasons may be mixed up. Ending may be abrupt or nonexistent</td>
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<td>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.1a Introduce claim(s), acknowledge and distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and organize the reasons and evidence logically.</td>
<td>Presentation includes plenty of well-chosen references from different sources, each with a clear, thoughtful explanation of its meaning and an appropriate citation. Ends by helping the audience infer the significance.</td>
<td>Presentation has enough evidence that works, with appropriate explanations/ inferences and citations.</td>
<td>Needs more evidence, or evidence needs to be more specific. May need to analyze/explain evidence better. Inferences may be off.</td>
<td>Evidence is unclear, may just be summarized or vague references. Evidence is not explained/ analyzed. Sources are not cited.</td>
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<tr>
<td>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.1e Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.</td>
<td>Presentation includes effective multimedia supports (e.g. visuals on a screen to support points presented during a live presentation; entire presentation recorded with visuals and audio, edited on computer) and uses them to help make points and keep audience focused</td>
<td>Presentation includes some multimedia supports to help make points and add interest.</td>
<td>Presentation attempts multimedia supports but they are distracting, repetitive, or not used well.</td>
<td>Not attempted</td>
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<td>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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.</td>
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<td>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.5 Integrate multimedia and visual displays into presentations to clarify information, strengthen claims and evidence, and add interest.</td>
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Performance Task B – Writing about Allusions

There are no new ideas. There are only new ways of making them felt.
Audre Lorde

CCSS Reading Alignment:

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.

Other Standards: W 8.1a-f (writing argumentative essay)

Preparatory assignment:
Complete the allusions study guide by answering these questions:
Quote: Copy down the lines that contain an allusion.
Source: What outside work is being referenced?
Explanation: What is being suggested by the allusion? (How does the author connect or transform the source text?)
Purpose: What deeper meaning is brought into the story by using this allusion? Or what feeling or mood is created?

Student Prompt
Identify an allusion used directly by Keyes OR a classic story that Keyes’ story parallels. Trace what topic or idea both stories address, citing examples from both the classic and modern stories to show the similarities. How does the author draw on themes from the other story? How does the author’s portrayal of the character or theme differ from the classic source?

Then compile this information to write a short argumentative essay explaining the connection, and evaluating whether Keyes’ use of this idea in the story is effective in communicating an idea to modern audiences. Be sure to start with an introduction identifying your sources, justify your answer with examples and explanations based on the text, address an opposing view, and conclude by commenting on the theme’s significance.
# Rubric - Performance Task B – Writing about Allusions

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<td>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.</td>
<td>Correctly identifies allusion. Analyzes the connection between the modern and classic text in detail and with concrete examples. Examines how author transforms or reinterprets the classic to create deeper meaning.</td>
<td>Correctly identifies allusion and explains the allusion accurately to connect the texts. Presents an interpretation of purpose/meaning.</td>
<td>Identifies an allusion and explains a meaning behind it. May need development in connecting the texts and in how the material is made new.</td>
<td>May identify allusion incorrectly or provide unclear explanation of the meaning and purpose.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.1 Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence</td>
<td>Takes a clear stance about the effectiveness of the allusion. Starts with an introduction identifying the sources and setting up the argument. Justifies answer with clear, appropriate examples and insightful explanations based on the text. Rationally addresses an opposing view. Concludes by commenting on the significance. Logically organized with clear paragraphs and advanced transitions.</td>
<td>Takes a stance about the effectiveness of the allusion. Organized with an introduction, clearly organized body paragraphs, and conclusion, using transitions. Justifies answer with concrete examples and explanations based on the text. Addresses an opposing view.</td>
<td>Paragraph organization may need some revising. Claim is present, but needs clearer reasons or better choice of evidence.</td>
<td>May be all one paragraph, or mixed-up organization. May have unclear claim. May not give clear reasons or evidence.</td>
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Performance Task C: Evaluating Conflicting Movie Reviews

Preparatory Activity:
Watch excerpts from a movie based on Keyes’ Story “Flowers for Algernon.” (Teacher’s choice: Charly (1968) or Flowers for Algernon (2000)
Complete Movie Adaptation Viewing Guide handout.

Student Prompt:
Whose review is right?
Part 1:
Read two movie reviews about this film, and identify the main argument in each one. Notice when the reviewers based their decisions on evidence or where they provide unsubstantiated opinions.
Looking at them side by side, note where they agree and disagree. Explain why the reviews might vary as they did, based on your knowledge of the movie genre, the review genre, and/or the sources of the reviews.

Part 2:
Then make your own judgment and recommendation about the movie. Comment on several specific choices made by the directors and actors. (Note: While your review might agree or disagree with some of the same elements as a reviewer, you should discuss a different combination of elements.)

Part 3:
Include a commentary on the benefits and drawbacks of reading the story versus watching it.

CCSS Reading Alignment:
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.

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.

RI 8.8 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.

RI 8.9 Analyze a case in which two or more texts provide conflicting information on the same topic and identify where the texts disagree on matters of fact or interpretation.

Other standards:
W 8.1, 8.4, 8.5, 8.6, 8.9b, 8.10
### Rubric – Performance Task C – Movie Review

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<td>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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.</td>
<td>Makes clear and important discriminations between the two versions, noting plenty of specific decisions and details. While speculating appropriately on why the decisions might have been made, the author judges whether the decisions were effective for the medium and audience.</td>
<td>Makes some distinctions between the versions, with specific examples. The author judges whether the decisions were effective ones.</td>
<td>Makes few distinctions or needs more concrete examples to provide clarity in the analysis. Opinion of the choices may need more solid substantiation.</td>
<td>Describes differences but does not analyze them. Provides little evidence of knowledge of the genres or critical thinking.</td>
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<td>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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.</td>
<td>Thoughtfully considers the experiences of the two versions based on the most important benefits and drawbacks of each medium, and takes a logical position. It addresses the idea of different mediums having different purposes and methods to create an experience or communicate an idea.</td>
<td>Considers some differences between the mediums’ potential or goals, and judges which was more successful, with logical explanations.</td>
<td>Identifies some differences in the experience of using the different mediums, but needs deeper analysis.</td>
<td>May provide an unsubstantiated preference for one medium, but needs to incorporate evidence and logic.</td>
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<td>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.8 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. (writing standard related: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.9b)</td>
<td>Clearly lays out the argument of each review article, and critically evaluates whether the review is justified based on sound reasoning and plenty of good evidence.</td>
<td>Summarizes the argument of each review article and points out strengths and weaknesses.</td>
<td>Generally summarizes the arguments of the articles, with some general comments on the level of support.</td>
<td>May summarize some of the arguments but does not assess the reasoning and evidence.</td>
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<td>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.9 Analyze a case in which two or more texts provide conflicting information on the same topic and identify where the texts disagree on matters of fact or interpretation.</td>
<td>Accurately identifies and carefully analyzes the differences between the reviews, and gives logical explanations for the differences.</td>
<td>Identifies differences between the reviews and gives some explanation.</td>
<td>Identifies differences in the reviews, but analysis is general, needs more concrete examples.</td>
<td>Few points of disagreement noted, or given without specific citations or analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.1 Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence</td>
<td>Contains multiple paragraphs with clear organization (topics and transitions), presents a clear claim about the movie’s merit or lack thereof, and supports it with multiple reasons relating to the decisions of the directors or actors.</td>
<td>Contains multiple paragraphs with good organization, a solid claim, and some reasons and explanations.</td>
<td>Paragraph organization may need some revising. Claim is present, but needs clearer reasons or better choice of evidence.</td>
<td>May be all one paragraph, or mixed-up organization. Unclear claim. May not give clear reasons or evidence.</td>
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<td>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.</td>
<td>Plenty of solid, relevant evidence from the movie/text supports all reasons given. All evidence is thoroughly explained/connected to support the claim.</td>
<td>Concrete evidence supports each reason, and is explained sufficiently.</td>
<td>Evidence is not always the most relevant, or is not explained well enough to build support.</td>
<td>Little or no evidence given; irrelevant or not explained.</td>
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APPENDIX C
Sample Lesson Plans and Daily Instructional Strategies
Lesson Plans and Daily Instructional Strategies

Lesson 1  Genre reading strategies

Overview: Students work in groups to discern strategies for working with different genres, and then share these with the class. These can then be revisited before addressing new genres throughout the unit.

Essential Questions: 1. When reading several related things, how do I know what to focus on and what to believe? (R8.7, 8.8)

Focus Questions: What is genre? What is medium? How do I read things differently depending on what genre and medium they are? Why did the author write this? How do I know if it is reliable? How can I “break the code” and figure this out?

Instruction:  – Anticipatory Set – Put a secret code on the board and see who can crack it.
   – Introduce the idea of genres and media and brainstorm a list as a whole class.
   – Demonstrate that different texts have different expectations built in for the reader (demonstrate with comics vs. manga, or Instagram photos versus Van Gogh) – that they need to be “code breakers.” Make a list of:
     o Text/media features
     o Author’s purpose, reliability and bias
     o Strategies to read this and understand this – to “break the code”
   – Students will form groups, and each group should examine a different genre that will be part of the upcoming unit. Groups should create a reading guide for the rest of the class for that genre. These will be posted on the wall, presented to the class, and revisited as that genre appears as part of the unit.
Sample Genres:
- poem
- article
- TED talk/video lecture
- movie
- short story
- website
- letter (open letter)
- magazine article
- quotes
- myth
- movie trailer
- movie review

*photos, paintings, and political cartoons are not included as texts in this unit, but could be included on the list of genres if more topics are needed, or if groups get done sooner and want to start a second one.

Differentiation: Lower-ability students can be assigned simpler text types. Provide an example and a fill-in-the-blank organizer. Choice may be given in the style of reading guide—poster, brochure, orbital/foldable, etc.

For Further Strategy Reading: 


Lesson 2

“Raymond’s Run” by Toni Cade Bambara

Short story, 1270L (above 8th grade level)

Overview:

Students read about an African-American girl with a developmentally disabled brother, learning to balance her passion for running and winning with her respect for her competitor and her love for her brother. This introduces the idea of differently abled people being respected and cared for. Depending on time, this story on its own is full of potential for any sort of lesson, including introducing allusions, voice/dialect, using text to support argument, or even writing a narrative (a time when you put someone else’s needs/wants before your own; *The Hunger Games* (the reaping ceremony scene) makes a nice comparative pairing for that theme). As an intro text to “Flowers for Algernon,” the focus is on the theme, and on awareness of reading purposes.
Essential Questions:
1. When reading several related things, how do I know what to focus on? (Leading toward this by building metacognitive strategy awareness in reading a text)
5. How does society respond to differences in intelligence and ability?
   How will I? What can be done to help everyone be respected and connected?

Focus Questions:
How is Squeaky’s understanding of and respect for herself reflected in her respect for others?
How does the unique relationship between Raymond and Squeaky teach them and others about respect and connection?
Do I realize it right away when I get confused/lost in reading?
What can I do when I get confused in reading?

Instruction:
Introduce self-monitoring strategies:
- Preview text, be aware of connections and predictions
- “Click or Clunk” – pause at the end of each sentence or section and evaluate whether it “clicked” – made sense – or “clunked” – confused you/ made you stop. Figure out what was the “clunk” (one word/ part of a sentence…)
- Fix-up strategies (try one or more): Back up a few sentences and reread it carefully. OR - Make a mental note of it and look forward for information, then come back and reread. OR - Deal with vocabulary (context, roots, look it up). OR – make yourself put it in your own words to clarify before moving on.
- At the end of a page, stop to see what you remember/ understood/ noticed. If you can’t tell much, reread (or skim) and try to put the pieces together.
- What is important to summarize in a narrative? Focus on character, conflict, tension, climax, resolution. Review “Somebody Wanted But So Then” summarization technique that many used in 7th grade: Who? What did they need/want/seek? What got in their way? What did they do about it? What happened?
Practice with text:
Remind students that they should focus on the “lens” of looking at characters’ relationships and the idea of respect.

Reading
- Read “Raymond’s Run,” starting together, asking students to pause at the end of each paragraph/section, write down “clunks,” and check in with their groups with a “click” or “clunk” and then get the gist of the paragraph out loud. (Gist: most important person/thing, what about it?)
- Summarize briefly in writing (rough draft/ note form) at the end of each page.
- Summarize at the end of the story (Somebody Wanted But So, theme)

Making Meaning: Use text evidence to answer these questions.
1. What does Squeaky value as her greatest traits?
2. What does she respect in others?
3. Of what is she critical in others?
4. What causes her to have new understandings of Gretchen and Raymond at the end?
5. How do these relate to her ideas about herself?
6. What would others learn by watching Squeaky and her brother?

Teacher should demonstrate or remind students about how to cite evidence in their answers (such as the RACE acronym: Restate, Answer, Cite, Explain). Students could be asked to complete these questions in preparation for a Socratic Seminar on the text.

Differentiation: Groups should be heterogeneous, with a good reader in each group to help with the “clunks.”

For further strategy reading: Wright, J., (2006). “Click or Clunk?” A student comprehension self-check. The Savvy Teacher’s Guide: Reading Interventions That Work. www.interventioncentral.org, p 25-27. http://www.readingrockets.org/article/using-collaborative-strategic-reading (students use collaborative groups with defined roles to apply “click/clunk” strategies and get the gist of a passage. This is a good goal for later in the year, after students have had more modeling.)
**Lesson 3**

**LIST ARTICLE:**
“12 Things We Know About How the Brain Works” - 900L (below 8th grade level)

| Overview: | Students read an article summarizing facts from the book *Brain Rules* - useful facts about the brain and learning, and the science behind them. They practice annotating a text, while building background about how strategy and metacognition affect learning. They also practice making intertextual connections while/after reading. |
| Essential Questions: | 1. When reading several related things, how do I know what to focus on and what to believe?  
4. What can people control about their brains? How can I make my brain work better? |
| Focus Questions: | How does marking up a text help me understand it better?  
How does this text relate to other things I know?  
Can I get smarter? |
| Instruction: | Hook/journal question – if you could magically make yourself smarter, would you? How much smarter? What would you be willing to give up? What would change?  
Introduce essential question #4 and topic of the brain. Mention performance task – presenting this information to other classes in order to inform and motivate them.  
Review the idea of annotating (familiar from last year) –  
Purpose – Reading with a pencil in hand helps you focus your mind on the text.  
Purposeful annotation (not just filling the page with marks) leaves you a trail of breadcrumbs to come back to when you go to write about or talk about the text. It frees your mind of those thoughts and lets you continue to be open to the reading.  
Method – Pencil rather than highlighter, keep it simple, but develop some key symbols to capture your thoughts. Write down your questions (and then go back and answer them as you are able). Besides your quick notes (reactions, vocab questions, etc.) – strive to write a few meaningful/insightful comments/connections per page – deep vs. |
shallow notes/comments.

If a group prepared a reading guide on a list article, have them present it.

Remind students that they are looking for ways people can control their brains, and paying attention to their reading comprehension (click or clunk).

Instructor demonstrates annotation with first part of text, then release and check in a few times, then have students finish and check in with partner.

- Connecting to a text – After reading, students brainstorm different subjects that could connect to the text,
  - Questions about the text: Does one part of the article relate to another?
  - Questions across texts: What other things you’ve read does this article remind you of?
  - Questions beyond the text: How does part of this article relate to what you’ve learned in school? How does this article remind you of yourself/ how is this like your life?

- Expressing Understanding – Students add a summary and a reflection on the text to their learning logs, responding to an aspect that stood out, or responding to the question, “Based on what you’ve read, what steps can you take to strengthen your brain?” with some key quotes.

End of discussion – ask why the brain topic might be an important subject, especially at the beginning of 8th grade.

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<th>Differentiation and support:</th>
<th>Provide a notecard or bookmark version of some annotating symbols and reminders. Provide effective and ineffective examples of annotated texts. Low-ability students may need longer practice annotating together in groups and figuring out what sorts of comments and marks to make.</th>
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has students investigate purposes of annotation through examples
(depending on student familiarity with the concept, may be useful)

Lesson 4  ANCHOR TEXT: “Flowers for Algernon” Progress Reports 1-3

Overview: Students will do an individual cold read, with the purpose of annotating to uncover character, point of view, and opening situation. Discussion to practice inference and close reading based on evidence.

Focus Questions:
What kind of text evidence will best support my claim?
What do I know about this character? How do I know?
Who’s telling the story? How does that make it funny, sad, or more effective?

Instruction:
Review short story genre reader’s guide.
Review annotation tips and goals – when starting a story, to figure out the who, where, when, what… the initial Somebody (who) Wanted (what) but (what is in their way?) Remind students to preview structure before beginning reading, and to mark in their “clunks” and either fix them by rereading, or read ahead and then come back to them.

Provide copies of these first few pages for students to write on. (After this, students will use the anthology copy and take notes on separate paper.) Students read first progress report, marking in their questions/confusion/inferences in the margins. (Students may be confused by the poor spelling, but will use this as grounds for inference and investigation of character and exposition. Journal structure is easy to follow.) After a few minutes of students beginning task, instructor may wish to demonstrate technique on document camera, using Progress Report 1.

Discuss in groups, and have each group summarize what they know (write in the gist of each section as they are able) and list what they’re wondering. Student-led whole class discussion. Teacher-led wrap-up with predictions.
Differentiation and support: Provide several pages and have more capable readers continue to work ahead while slower readers focus on the first and second progress report. Consider providing struggling students with a list of T/F questions to find answers for in the text, and then have them write in their evidence and where they found it.

For further strategy reading: Beers, G. K. (2012). *Notice & note: Strategies for close reading*. Sample lessons using cold read and student-led discussion, with some support from teacher. The six “signposts” taught in this book help students know what to focus on as they continue reading.

### Lesson 5

**IMAGES: Rorschach inkblots**  
**ARTICLE: What’s in an Inkblot? Some say, Not Much**

**Overview:** Students view inkblots and learn about the controversy in their usefulness through a contemporary nonfiction article. They then return to the anchor text and evaluate their use in the story, using modern standards.

**Essential Questions:**

1. When reading several related things, how do I know what to focus on and what to believe?

**Focus Questions:**

How do I figure out exactly what the author is trying to say?

**Instruction:** Show inkblots (available on Wikipedia – suggest prescreening to select a few most useful/appropriate for the age group). Have students jot down their thoughts, then share with a group. Then present briefly the main function of the test, and ask students to reflect on their answers or their neighbors’: discuss whether they think their reactions show what their brains are like.
Genre reading guide review – informational article (including evaluating source, author’s point of view – tells both sides). Preview article together and make plans for how to approach it. Goal – evaluate whether this was a good test for Charlie to take. This article has challenging vocabulary and syntax, so remind students that they can get the gist without understanding every word (but they should still mark in their “clunks”). Begin by teacher reading this aloud, doing think-aloud of annotating and constructing the gist. Teacher continues reading aloud, explaining some vocabulary, and pausing for students (in groups/pairs) to add notes to construct meaning and add questions. Depending on class ability, may choose to break up text and have students analyze the rest in pairs and present findings to class. Most important vocabulary terms’ definitions should be supplied.

Use Venn Diagram or Double Bubble Map to lay out the two sides of the argument. Discuss implications for the anchor text: Was the Rorschach test a good way to determine if Charlie should be a candidate for the surgery? Why or why not? Use evidence from the text to support your argument. If time allows, students may then go through the writing process of writing a short argumentative essay (alone or in pairs) on this topic, based on the evidence.

Students summarize texts in their learning logs and respond to self-selected quotes, or to open-ended questions – What ideas and systems seem normal and accepted today, but might be proven ineffective in future years?

Differentiation and support:

Optional extension to incorporate different modalities and additional social aspect – have students make inkblots by dabbing paint and folding a paper. The following day, when they are dry, have them evaluate several student-created inkblots. Then have them create a guide to their own – if you see ____, you are ____.
Support struggling students with an outline or reading guide to the article, with some headings there and some missing.
An allusion is when the writer or speaker makes a reference to an outside source all readers/viewers/listeners should know.

- This source is often a past text or event: history, religion, mythology, or literature. It could also be something current: a statement, person, place, or event from the arts, politics, sports, or science.
- The allusion does not give much detail about the reference. Rather, because these events or texts are momentous (significant historically, culturally, or politically) the speaker or author expects that people in general would understand the allusion without explanation.
- The allusion may be within a simile or metaphor (and is, by nature, a sort of metaphor).
- Its purpose is to let the reader understand new information, characters, plot, setting, etc. more deeply or easily by connecting it to something they already know.

The most common sources of allusions in Western literature are the Bible, Shakespeare, and Greek/Roman mythology. You are expected to be well-read to understand many allusions!

Example:
Don’t be a Scrooge!
The law has a “Good Samaritan” protection clause.
Don’t carry the weight of the world on your shoulders.
Sally had a smile that rivaled that of the Mona Lisa.

| Quote: Copy down the lines that contain an allusion. | Source: What outside work is being referenced? | Explanation: What is being suggested by the allusion? (How does the author connect or transform the source text?) | Purpose: What deeper meaning is brought into the story by using this allusion? Or what feeling or mood is created? |
Movie Adaptation Viewing Guide

A. As you watch the movie, pause periodically to jot down notes about what you identify as significantly different from the written text or exactly the same, and a comment about which version you preferred.

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</tbody>
</table>

B. After watching the movie, choose five most significant elements –both changes and things that stayed the same– and think critically about each one.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identify Element that was changed or kept the same</th>
<th>Rank Importance</th>
<th>Associate Effect of this decision on the reader’s experience of the story. Wise decision? Foolish mistake?</th>
<th>Evaluate/ Judge Does this decision increase understanding and enjoyment of the movie? Why or why not?</th>
</tr>
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</table>
C. As a wrap-up, hypothesize about what could have been done differently to make the movie better.

D. Application: If you were hired as director... Propose a new version, and suggest what would be most important in adapting the movie for today’s audiences. Solve any problems you saw in the old movie, and suggest modifications to improve it even further.
APPENDIX E
Supplemental Text for Text Set A: Quotations about Grit and Success
Quotes on Grit and Success

Courage is not a man with a gun in his hand. It's knowing you’re licked before you begin but you begin anyway and you see it through no matter what. You rarely win, but sometimes you do.
– Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*

It does not matter how slow you go so long as you do not stop.
-Confucius

It’s hard to beat a person who never gives up.
-Babe Ruth

Hardships often prepare ordinary people for an extraordinary destiny.
-C.S. Lewis

Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts.
-Winston Churchill

Kites rise highest against the wind, not with it.
-Winston Churchill

It is impossible to live without failing at something, unless you live so cautiously that you might as well not have lived at all – in which case, you fail by default.
-J.K. Rowling

It’s not that I’m so smart, it’s just that I stay with problems longer.
-Albert Einstein

If you quit once it becomes a habit. Never quit!!!
-Michael Jordan

Do not judge me by my successes, judge me by how many times I fell down and got back up again.
-Nelson Mandela

I’ve missed more than 9,000 shots in my career. I’ve lost almost 300 games. 26 times I’ve been trusted to take the game-winning shot and missed. I’ve failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed.
-Michael Jordan

I’m a great believer in luck and I find the harder I work, the more I have of it.
-Thomas Jefferson
APPENDIX F
Vocabulary List for Anchor Text
Vocabulary List – “Flowers for Algernon”

*Dates refer to “Progress Report” entry within short story text*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tier 2 and 3 words – based on Marzano’s Vocabulary for the Common Core (2013)</th>
<th>Subject-specific vocabulary to teach/discuss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>motivation – 3/8</td>
<td>Rorschach – 3/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conscious – 4/3</td>
<td>subconscious – 4/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>acquire – 4/30</td>
<td>IQ – 4/21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neurosurgeon – 4/27</td>
<td>naiveté – 5/20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Idioms and allusions -</th>
<th>Words for practicing context clues (these words’ meanings may be somewhat deciphered from context)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>reach a plateau – 4/18</td>
<td>marooned (spelled merooned) – 4/9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ride on his coattails – 4/27</td>
<td>“to pull a Charlie Gordon” – 4/20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shrew – 4/27</td>
<td>feeble minded – 4/22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>big shot – 4/27</td>
<td>opportunist – 4/27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tree of knowledge – 4/30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Words for looking at word families, word parts (roots/prefixes/suffixes)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>apathetic – 3/8 – a, path, ic</td>
<td>acquire – 4/30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uncooperative – 3/8 – un, co, ive</td>
<td>petition – 4/30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>discouraged – 3/23 – dis, cour, ed</td>
<td>contrary – 5/15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>subconscious – 4/3 – sub, con, ous</td>
<td>absurd – 5/15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>psychology – 4/21 – psych, ology</td>
<td>sensation – 5/15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>despised – 4/30 – de</td>
<td>tangible – 5/15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>infuriated – 5/20 – in</td>
<td>vacuous – 5/20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>illiteracy – 5/20 – il, acy</td>
<td>mirrored – 5/20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>regression – 5/31 – re, gress, ion</td>
<td>vacant – 5/20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deterioration – 6/5 – de, tion</td>
<td>peering – 5/20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>instability – 6/5 – in, ity</td>
<td>inferior – 5/20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>impaired – 6/22 – im</td>
<td>motor activity – 6/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>irritable – 6/15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>senility – 6/21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sentences to decipher/translate into easier language (discuss audience, word choice – may coordinate with a dictionary/thesaurus practice lesson in writing in different registers)

“He was educated in the tradition of narrow specialization; the broader aspects of background were neglected far more than necessary—even for a neurosurgeon.” (5/15)

“Artificially increased intelligence deteriorates proportionally to the quantity of increase” (break down the sentence to see how Charlie will regress) (6/5)

“General smoothing of the cerebral convolutions as well as deepening and broadening of brain fissures” (go through what this means to show that Charlie has permanent brain damage) (6/10)
APPENDIX G
Unit Evaluation Rubrics
## Tri-State Quality Review Rubric for Lessons & Units: ELA/Literacy (Grades 3-5) and ELA (Grades 6-12) – Version 5

### Grade: Literacy Lesson/Unit Title: Overall Rating:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I. Alignment to the Depth of the CCSS!</th>
<th>II. Key Shifts in the CCSS!</th>
<th>III. Instructional Supports</th>
<th>IV. Assessment!</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| The lesson/unit aligns with the letter and spirit of the CCSS:  
  - Targets a set of grade-level CCSS ELA/Literacy standards.  
  - Includes a clear and explicit purpose for instruction.  
  - Selects text(s) that measure within the grade-level text complexity band and are of sufficient quality and scope for the stated purpose.  
  (i.e., presents vocabulary, syntax, text structures, levels of meaning/purpose, and other qualitative characteristics similar to CCSS grade-level exemplars in Appendices A & B)  
  **In addition for units:**  
  - Integrates reading, writing, speaking and listening so that students apply and synthesize advancing literacy skills.  
  - (Grades 3-5) Builds students’ content knowledge and their understanding of reading and writing in social studies, the arts, science or technical subjects through the coherent selection of texts. | The lesson/unit addresses key shifts in the CCSS:  
  - Reading/Text Closest: Makes reading text(s) closely, examining textual evidence, and discerning deep meaning a central focus of instruction.  
  - Text@Evidence: Facilitates rich and rigorous evidence-based discussions and writing about common texts through a sequence of specific, thought-provoking, and text-dependent questions (including, when applicable, questions about illustrations, charts, diagrams, audio/video, and media).  
  - Writing From Sources: Routinely expects that students draw evidence from texts to produce clear and coherent writing that informs, explains, or makes an argument in various written forms (notes, summaries, short responses, or formal essays).  
  - Academic Vocabulary: Focuses on building students’ academic vocabulary in context throughout instruction.  
  **In addition for units:**  
  - Increasing Text Complexity: Focuses students on reading a progression of complex texts drawn from the grade-level band. Provides text-centered instruction that is sequenced, scaffolded and supported to advance students toward independent reading of complex texts at the CCR level.  
  - Building Disciplinary Knowledge: Provides opportunities for students to build knowledge about a topic or subject through analysis of a coherent selection of strategically sequenced, discipline-specific texts.  
  - Balance@fTexts: Within a collection of grade-level units a balance of informational and literary texts is included according to guidelines in the CCSS (p. 5).  
  - Balance@fWriting: Includes a balance of on-demand and process writing (e.g., multiple drafts and revisions over time) and short, focused research projects, incorporating digital texts where appropriate. | The lesson/unit is responsive to varied student learning needs:  
  - Cultivates student interest and engagement in reading, writing, and speaking about texts.  
  - Addresses instructional expectations and is easy to understand and use.  
  - Provides all students with multiple opportunities to engage with text of appropriate complexity for the grade level; includes appropriate scaffolding so that students directly experience the complexity of the text.  
  - Focuses on challenging sections of text(s) and engages students in a productive struggle through discussion questions and other supports that build toward independence.  
  - Integrates appropriate supports in reading, writing, listening and speaking for students who are ELL, have disabilities, or read below the grade level text band.  
  - Provides extensions and or more advanced text for students who read well above the grade level text band.  
  **In addition for units:**  
  - Includes a progression of learning where concepts and skills advance and deepen over time.  
  - Gradually removes supports, requiring students to demonstrate their independent capacities.  
  - Provides for authentic learning, application of literacy skills, student-directed inquiry, analysis, evaluation, and/or reflection.  
  - Integrates targeted instruction in such areas as grammar and conventions, writing strategies, discussion rules, and all aspects of foundational reading for grades 3-5.  
  - Includes independent reading based on student choice and interest to build stamina, confidence, and motivation; indicates how students are accountable for that reading.  
  - Uses technology and media to deepen learning and draw attention to evidence and texts as appropriate.  
  - Used varied modes of assessment, including a range of pre, formative, summative, and self-assessment measures that provide sufficient guidance for interpreting student performance.  
  **In addition, for units:**  
  - Includes aligned rubrics or assessment guidelines that provide sufficient guidance for interpreting student performance.  
  - Used varied modes of assessment, including a range of pre, formative, summative, and self-assessment measures. | The lesson/unit regularly assesses whether students are mastering standards-based content and skills:  
  - Elicits direct, observable evidence of the degree to which a student can independently demonstrate the major targeted grade level CCSS standards with appropriately complex text(s).  
  - Assesses student proficiency using methods that are unbiased and accessible to all students.  
  - Includes aligned rubrics or assessment guidelines that provide sufficient guidance for interpreting student performance.  
  **In addition, for units:**  
  - Uses varied modes of assessment, including a range of pre, formative, summative, and self- assessment measures. |


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Quality Review Rubric developed by the Tri-State Collaborative (MA, NY, RI – facilitated by Achieve) Version 5, January 2013 – rubric for EQuIP Quality Review. View Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Unported License at [http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/) "Educators may use or adapt. If modified, please attribute Tri-State and re-title."
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade:</th>
<th>Literacy Lesson/Unit Title:</th>
<th>Overall Rating:</th>
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### I. Alignment to the Depth of the CCSS

The lesson/unit addresses key shifts in the CCSS:
- **Reading Text Closely:** Makes reading text(s) closely, examining textual evidence, and discerning deep meaning a central focus of instruction.
- **Text-based Evidence:** Facilitates rich and rigorous evidence-based discussions and writing about common texts through a sequence of specific, thought-provoking, and text-dependent questions (including, when applicable, questions about illustrations, charts, diagrams, audio/video, and media).
- **Writing from Sources:** Routinely expects that students draw evidence from texts to produce clear and coherent writing that informs, explains, or makes an argument in various written forms (notes, summaries, short responses, or formal essays).
- **Academic Vocabulary:** Focuses on building students’ academic vocabulary in context throughout instruction.

**In addition for units:**
- **Increasing Text Complexity:** Focuses students on reading a progression of complex texts drawn from the grade-level band. Provides text-centered learning that is sequenced, scaffolded, and supported to advance students toward reading at the CCR level.
- **Building Disciplinary Knowledge:** Provides opportunities for students to build knowledge about a topic or subject through analysis of a coherent selection of strategically sequenced, discipline-specific texts.
- **Balancing Texts:** Within a collection of grade-level units a balance of informational and literary texts is included according to guidelines in the CCSS (p. 5).
- **Balancing Writing:** Includes a balance of on-demand and process writing (e.g., multiple drafts and revisions over time) and short, focused research projects, incorporating digital texts where appropriate.

### II. Key Shifts in the CCSS

- The lesson/unit addresses key shifts in the CCSS:

### III. Instructional Supports

- The lesson/unit is responsive to varied student learning needs:
  - Cultivates student interest and engagement in reading, writing, and speaking about texts.
  - Addresses instructional expectations and is easy to understand and use.
  - Provides all students with multiple opportunities to engage with text of appropriate complexity for the grade level; includes appropriate scaffolding so that students directly experience the complexity of the text.
  - Focuses on challenging sections of text(s) and engages students in a productive struggle through discussion questions and other supports that build toward independence.
  - Integrates appropriate supports in reading, writing, listening, and speaking for students who are ELL, have disabilities, or read well below the grade level text band.
  - Provides extensions and/or more advanced text for students who read well above the grade level text band.

**In addition for units:**
- Includes a progression of learning where concepts and skills advance and deepen over time.
- Gradually removes supports, requiring students to demonstrate their independence capacities.
- Provides for authentic learning, application of literacy skills, student-directed inquiry, analysis, evaluation, and/or reflection.
- Integrates targeted instruction in such areas as grammar and conventions, writing strategies, discussion rules, and all aspects of foundational reading for grades 3-5.
- Includes independent reading based on student choice and interest to build stamina, confidence, and motivation; indicates how students are accountable for that reading.
- Uses technology and media to deepen learning and draw attention to evidence and texts as appropriate.

### IV. Assessment

- The lesson/unit regularly assesses whether students are mastering standards-based content and skills:
  - Elicits direct, observable evidence of the degree to which a student can independently demonstrate the major targeted grade level CCSS standards with appropriately complex text(s).
  - Assesses student proficiency using methods that are unbiased and accessible to all students.
  - Includes aligned rubrics or assessment guidelines that provide sufficient guidance for interpreting student performance.

**In addition for units:**
- Uses varied modes of assessment, including a range of pre, formative, summative, and self-assessment measures.

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**Rating:** 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Unit Evaluation Questionnaire

based on “Revised Publishers’ Criteria for the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts and Literacy, Grades 3–12” (Coleman & Pimentel, 2012)

Text Selection
1. Is the text appropriately complex for the level and the timing in the year, based on qualitative, quantitative, and task measures?
2. Is appropriate scaffolding available for students who will have trouble reaching the text?
3. Are there short, challenging texts for close reading?
4. Is there a variety in the lengths, levels, and density of texts?
5. Is there an appropriate balance of literature and literary nonfiction?
6. Are the texts of high quality?

Questions and tasks
1. Are a significant percentage of tasks and questions text-dependent, helping students build knowledge, gather evidence, and make connections?
2. Does the sequencing of questions and tasks help students make deeper inferences and analyses?
3. Do the questions and tasks require the use of textual evidence?
4. Are there questions worth answering, so to motivate student interest and engagement to dig into the texts and topics?
5. Do the materials encourage comparing and integrating multiple sources?
6. Does the scaffolding encourage and enable lower-level students to encounter the text (rather than replacing reading the text)?
7. Are reading strategies and broad themes/questions interwoven into the task of reading, rather than taught discretely?
8. Are there opportunities for whole-group, small-group, and individual instruction?
9. Is sufficient class time given for students to practice encountering texts without scaffolding?
10. Do the questions and tasks demand careful text comprehension before asking students to evaluate/interpret?
11. Is the unit focused, avoiding extraneous material that could be distracting from the main focus of text-based reading/writing/speaking/listening?
12. Do frequent assessments require students to demonstrate their independence in reading/writing?

Vocabulary
1. Are there materials focused on academic vocabulary?
2. Are students asked to explain the impact of word choice in their reading?
3. Are students given plenty of opportunities to practice using the academic vocabulary in writing and speaking?
4. Are there support materials for ELL and other students to learn other high-frequency words on their own?

**Writing**
1. Are students given extensive opportunities to write in response to what they read?
2. Do the writing tasks demand analysis and synthesis of sources, using evidence?
3. Are there rubrics and samples for assignments?
4. Is the writing balanced among argumentative, informative, and narrative writing (with a slight preference for the first two)?
5. Will writing be evaluated not on a formulaic structure but on elements of good writing?
6. Are short research projects included (several annually)?

**Additional Criteria**
1. Do materials give chances for students to build fluency in reading?
2. Are there chances for students to have real, substantive discussions to share preparation, evidence, and research? Will they be required to listen, respond to and challenge their peers?
3. Do the materials use multimedia and technology to deepen attention to texts, such as comparing interpretations or evidence?
4. Do materials support students' mastery of the craft of language?
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