Effective And Engaging Online Learning A Research Based Blended Curriculum In The Middle School Language Arts Classroom

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EFFECTIVE AND ENGAGING ONLINE LEARNING

A RESEARCH BASED BLENDED CURRICULUM IN THE MIDDLE SCHOOL

LANGUAGE ARTS CLASSROOM

by

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

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Overview

As I go into my second year of teaching, I am taking a serious look at how I support my students’ learning. I worked hard to make curriculum for my students, but, reflecting on my first year of teaching, I felt that I did not fully utilize the online aspect of my school’s program. I am extremely passionate about the unique design of the school I teach in and want to provide my students with a positive learning environment where they can be successful, whether that is online or in person. The purpose of this study is to identify the methods of online instruction that best facilitate student learning.

Background of Researcher

I have just completed my first year of teaching and even in that short amount of time I have had some inner turmoil and sleepless nights about whether or not I am serving my students in the best way possible.

I fell in love with the idea of becoming a teacher because, in school, I felt underserved. My high school was known for high level academics, and it very much deserved that reputation. But as a student who struggled with anxiety, I spent most of my days finding a way to get out of school and avoid class altogether. As an adult, I am willing to take a hard look at myself and my high school to try to determine what exactly it was that I was running from. I still do not have the answer to that one, but I can identify the few things that were able to keep me in the classroom: good relationships with teachers, engaging activities and assignments, and knowing that I would be able to get help when I needed it.
During my undergraduate career, I explored how to become a teacher and how I could make school engaging for my students. I remember in particular one project I undertook during my time as an undergraduate that explored alternative high school programs. I talked to teachers at these schools, observed the classes, and got to know some of the students. Throughout the project I kept seeing so much of myself in these students and realized how beneficial an alternative setting would have been to me during high school. As I was working on my teaching licensure, I was sure that I wanted to be a teacher at an alternative high school. I was so connected to the students in that type of program and the ideals behind the alternative education setting. I think that is what drew me to the school at which I currently teach. At the beginning of the year, my students come in and I know that some of them spent at least half an hour convincing themselves to come to school, or fighting with their parents about whether to go to school that day. Our school's unique programming and policies allow students to ease their anxiety and distress. When I watch them grow and realize that school does not need to be quite as stressful or the source of their anxiety, I see them open up and really start to enjoy their learning.

As a teacher now, I strive to make the things that kept me in school a part of my classroom, as I know the important role they can play in a student’s education. Relationship building has actually been the fun part of this journey for me. I have seen introverted students come out of their shell in my class simply because they know they are free to be themselves and are accepted in my classroom. I have the joy of having small classes so I am able to provide students with more one-on-one support than I ever dreamed possible. Creating engaging assignments and activities, though, is the element that has become the trickiest to implement, especially in the context of online learning.
Context of Research

My first year of teaching was not only challenging due to it being my first year, but I was also coming into a unique school. Cyber Village Academy (CVA) is a charter school located in the Highland Park area of Saint Paul, Minnesota and has quite a distinctive program. Not only does it offer a fully online program, the Program for Accelerated Studies Using Computer-Assisted Learning (PASCAL), but it also offers “an educational approach that, to our knowledge, remains unique in the United States: students spend 3 days in classes on campus and 2 days online each week, generally participating from home or our Study Center” (Cyber Village Academy 2015). This is called the Fusion program.

CVA has a wonderful slogan; “We love quirky kids”. The distinctive format of the school appeals to many students, but especially those that struggle with a traditional school setting. CVA has many students who struggle with anxiety, other emotional disorders, or learning disabilities that affect their ability to be in school five days a week. The staff at CVA prides themselves on their ability to accommodate and support students who cannot or do not want to fit into the traditional mold of public schools. The online learning component of this program works well for these students and provides them with a break from the stress of a classroom.

Students in the Fusion program make up about 70% of the students who attend CVA. Much of the focus of curriculum planning and instruction goes to these students, but technology and online learning make up 40% of their learning as well. I want to make sure that the students in my school, both Fusion and PASCAL, are getting the most out of their online instruction and this educational context has led me to my research question.

Background of Research Question
After my first year of teaching, I felt the same joy any teacher would feel about a job well done. I had survived that dreaded first year of teaching. I finally felt like I had a handle on the expectations and reality of teaching and went into the summer ready to revamp my entire curriculum. It felt like, during that first year, I was just trying my best to stay afloat. I was constantly rushing to finish lesson planning and activity preparation. I vowed that for my second year I would have such well thought out curriculum and learning experiences that my students would make leaps and bounds in their learning. As the last few days of the school year came to a close, I realized I have no idea how to make a curriculum like the one I described. So, I looked to the experts. I began reading most anything I can get my hands on about teaching Language Arts to middle school students. Kelly Gallagher became like a mentor to me through his writing. I devoured literature on the topic of teaching middle school Language Arts. What I found while reading, though, is that all the amazing things I was learning focused on the traditional in-class face-to-face learning environments. Although I began incorporating my new learning into my Fusion classes, I felt that my students’ online learning experience was sorely lacking refinement. Many times, online school days turned into reading days. Rather than having the students continuing their learning on online school days, I used it as homework time. Many times I had students read their novels and complete comprehension questions. In a traditional school, students would be doing reading for class as homework and that is how I saw the Thursday and Friday online school days. After speaking to my school director and reflecting on my past school year, I realized I really needed to utilize this time better and develop curriculum for learning on these days for my students.

Research Question
In this study I explored the existing research about online learning to develop a curriculum that is both engaging and effective in the online and blended learning classroom. In exploring the literature, I used the following question to guide my research: “What is the best method to facilitate student learning in the online environment?” The goal of this research is to be able to implement a research based curriculum that meets the needs of the students at Cyber Village Academy and its unique blended learning program.

Summary

The preceding chapter explored the idea of incorporating online learning into the middle school language arts classroom and my journey to seeing the important role online learning can play for students who struggle in traditional public schools. There are a plethora of online learning programs out there and none of them seem to be doing things the same way. As an educator, I believe that no two students learn in the same way and that online learning can be a great benefit to students who are struggling in traditional education systems. However, online learning needs to be implemented in the most beneficial way and I want to discover how to do just that. Not only will this benefit my own curriculum design and help my students to learn effectively while online, but it may be able to begin a dialogue in my school about the best way to support students’ online learning.

As there are so many programs and schools that focus on online learning, I was curious as to the methods that have been shown, through research, to be most effective. The next chapter will take an in-depth look at the current research available about online learning.
CHAPTER TWO

Review of Literature

Overview

In exploring the methods of online instruction that best facilitate student learning it is important to begin by exploring what exactly online learning consists of. This literature review begins with an overview and some history about the world of online learning and its growth through the years. In order to understand how to effectively teach in an online environment, one must first understand what an online learning environment looks like and how it works. Then the review explores the perceptions that students and instructors have about online learning. Many instructors have preconceived notions of what online learning is and how it works. With the way that technology has changed and grown, there are vast improvements to online learning that many may not be aware of. Students also have ideas about online learning and many see it as an “easy A” in a class or believe it won’t be as “good” of an education as the traditional classroom. These are concepts that will need to be changed as the curriculum is implemented. Students need to come to understand that there are high expectations of students even in an online environment and that an online classroom can be just as appealing and successful as a face-to-face classroom. Next, different methods of effective online learning are explored. Robert Gagne and his nine events of instruction are described as they have been proven to help create an online classroom environment that not only addresses the learning content, but increases student motivation and engagement. Lecture, demonstration, group discussions, questioning, and gamification are all techniques that are explored next. These are all research based methods of teaching in the online classroom that will be utilized in the development of the middle school language arts curriculum in this study. Finally, the literature review explores how an instructor can sufficiently engage and
motivate their students in the online classroom. A curriculum may be effective in teaching the content, but if the students are becoming bored or are not invested in the learning, the expected learning may not sufficiently take place.

**What is Online Learning?**

As technology expands, many have seen the opportunities it presents for education. During the 2007-2008 school year more than one million students were enrolled in K-12 online classes (Canzian, 2010). Then during the 2009-2010 school year that number jumped to 1.8 million students enrolled in online courses (What is an Online Course?, 2012). This trend also applies to university level classes as well. Approximately 33.5% of all students in college will enroll in an online course and while higher education annual enrollment growth was at about 1.2% from 2011 to 2012, the annual online enrollment growth for the same time period was about 6.1% (Hegeman, 2015). Students themselves are seeing the benefit of technology and the internet. Strom reports that “adolescents consider the internet to be their most important resource [and] the amount of time that adolescents spend online has increased continuously to the current average of 15 hours per week” (2009). Strom also reported that 86% of students and 83% of parents believe that the internet can improve study habits and schoolwork (2009). Online education is fast becoming a norm for many universities and students are asking for more technology incorporation in the classroom.

So, what exactly is online learning? Online courses “deliver a series of lessons to a web browser or mobile device, to be conveniently accessed anytime, anyplace” by the students (What is an Online Course?, 2012). Many schools implementing online learning will employ a content management system like Google Classroom, Desire 2 Learn (D2L), or Moodle. These systems are used to give students access to instructional material implemented by the instructor. Students
are able to access this material at any time, and from any device that has internet access. The material may be made available at certain times, as in a paced course, where all students are moving ahead at the same pace. Conversely, the material could all be put on the site at one time and the students are able to work through it all at their own pace. This is known as a self-paced course. Online courses are much more than a simple presentation of information. “Online courses require interaction, direction, and feedback” (What is an Online Course?, 2012). There is no specific template for a perfect online course and that is why there has been so much research on the subject of online learning in recent years. Many researchers are actually encouraging educators to explore how the internet can contribute to and modernize learning (Strom, 2009). Some educators still seem reluctant to incorporate online learning into their curriculum however.

**Attitudes towards Online Learning**

In the past, online learning has had a poor reputation among students and teachers. Some students took courses online that they felt were too easy or that they didn’t learn anything new from. Some online courses were seen as confusing and teacher communication was lacking. Teachers struggle with perceptions of how students will act while taking the course. Many teachers believe that students only take the online course because it will be easier, or because it is easier to cheat in an online course (Kremer, 2011). Both students and instructors may “fear change, lack needed technological expertise, be convinced that traditional methods are more effective, or simply prefer face-to-face instruction” (Andrade, 2015) even though, due to advances in technology and research, online learning has become a much better educational system in recent years.

Students who are currently in middle school have grown up surrounded by technology. They are able to use the internet and computers better than most adults. They are known for their
ability to use technology with ease and, when asked, would prefer to use new technology rather than learn with books and pen and paper. These inclinations towards technology could be extremely beneficial in shifting their attitudes about online learning (Edwards, 2013).

Many times instructors are concerned about the lack of communication and lower quality of communication as well as many other valid concerns in an online learning environment. However, these concerns are easily remedied through appropriate instructor training (Andrade, 2015).

Students and teachers may not know it at the onset of an online class but they need to be problem-solvers and look at this new learning experience in a positive light. They need to work together to think outside of the box and employ flexibility and creativity when faced with these new opportunities and any difficulties that may arise in the online learning environment. While online learning continues to grow and change as a medium for delivering learning, students and teachers need to embrace the change and realize that online learning has come a long way, and has the potential to do amazing things (Podoll, 2015).

**Methods of Online Learning**

**Gagne’s nine events of instruction.** Robert Gagne, an instructional psychologist and behaviorist, has contributed greatly to the field of learning and designing instruction. Through his research he has identified nine instructional events “that should satisfy or provide the necessary conditions for learning and serve as the basis for designing instruction and selecting appropriate media” (Culatta, 2015). Gagne believes that the any instructional lesson is not complete without these nine events and instructors should keep them in mind and attend to each event when planning instruction, especially in the online learning environment. The nine events consist of: gaining attention of the students, informing students of the objectives of the lesson,
stimulating recall of prior learning, presenting the content of the lesson, providing the student with learning guidance, eliciting performance or practice, providing feedback, assessing performance, and enhancing retention and transfer to the job or real life. Each step may be as short or as long as the instructor deems necessary. Many instructors overlook the first step, gaining attention, but this can be one of the most important of the nine steps. Students’ attention spans are shorter than they have ever been, and grabbing their attention will help them get excited about the content you are about to present. Some ideas for gaining student’s attention include: show a short video about the topic, ask a thought-provoking question, tell a story that the students can relate to about the subject matter, state a surprising fact about the topic to pique their interest, or combine sound effects and graphics to create an intro that catches their attention. Once you have the student’s attention you then want to inform them of the objectives for the lesson or the unit. Letting students know what the goal for the day helps them to gauge their own learning as well as helping the instructor stay focused on the objective. This can be as simple as stating the objective, or creating it into an essential question that you hope to have students answer. A fun and engaging way to present the objectives is to state them as a challenge or mission. The instructor could say “Your mission today is…” or “The challenge today is to…”. Once the instructor has introduced the objectives, they should assess what students already know on the topic or reinforce information the instructor knows they have learned about the topic. KWL charts are a great way to see what students already know on a topic, but the instructor can also ask open ended questions to assess previous knowledge or quiz them on what they learned previously. Having students associate what they are about to learn with information they have previously learned can help them to encode and retain the new information (Gagne’s Nine Events, 2016). Finally, the instructor will present the new information. Many teachers skip one
or more of the previous three steps and jump right into this fourth step, but this build up to the new content will help students retain what they are learning in this presentation of content. Many of the sections that follow this will go into specific content presentation strategies for the online classroom. Some methods that will be explored are lecture, demonstrations, discussion, role-playing, simulations, and gamification. In the fifth step, the instructor will help to guide the students in their learning. Many think of this as the part where gradual release of responsibility comes in. The idea behind gradual release of responsibility is that the learning starts with the instructor teaching and then demonstrating the skill. From there the students work with the teacher to practice the skill. Finally, the students would practice the skill on their own. Many also think of it as “I do, we do, you do”. This fifth step, providing learning guidance, would be the “we do” step in Gagne’s nine events. The instructor can provide scaffolding, hints, modeling, examples and non-examples, or other material to help guide the student in the use and learning of the skill. The next step is to elicit performance from the student or have them practice the skill on their own. This is where instructors would use formative assessment techniques to elicit performance from the students. Instructors can ask students to read or write about information they have learned, or answer deeper thinking questions. The goal here is for the student to demonstrate their learning. Once the student has provided the evidence of what they have learned so far, the instructor should provide feedback so that the learner can tell if they are moving in the correct direction, or if they need to go back and revisit the material to relearn it. All feedback should be specific and as close to immediate as it can be. This feedback can be confirmatory, letting the student know they are doing well, or corrective, letting the student know that some things may need to be relearned. This feedback should be more than just a simple grade, however, as this is not the point where formal scoring should take place. This type of feedback is
used to help the student assess their own learning as well as helping the instructor to see where students need help in the learning process. The next step, assessing performance, is the step where formal scoring should take place. There are many options for assessing performance, but instructors, again, want to elicit something from the students to assess. Instructors could use pre- and post-tests to assess for learning, but the assessment should resemble what they have already practiced. There should also be no guidance, hints, or feedback from the instructor during the assessment so that the instructor can fully evaluate the learning of the student. The last step is to enhance retention and transfer. Helping students to see the importance of the material in their everyday life is essential to retention of information and allows for students to see the importance of their learning. Instructors can give learners ways to practice their new learning out in the real world or can show students how the information they just learned can be built upon in future lessons or courses. This is the point at which the instructor should show the students the value of the information they are learning. All of these events should be a part of an excellent online learning environment and help student to retain what they are learning online so should be taken into serious consideration when designing an online course and selecting media to include (Culatta, 2015. Gagne's Nine Events, 2016. Kristinsdóttir, 2001. Lamotte, 2016.)

**Lecturing online.** A lecture style of content delivery is the presentation of information, facts, and/or principles from the instructor to the student. In recent years this style of content delivery has come under scrutiny as not being the most effective way of engaging students in learning. However, in the online environment, it is sometimes necessary, just like it is in the face to face classroom. In an online learning environment, the instructor must get creative with the way in which they lecture. Instructors can choose to present the lecture as a written text or an outline as well as a video or audio recording. They may also choose to combine these methods for a more
effective and engaging lecture experience. While in a traditional face to face lecture there is very little student participation, there can be participation within the online learning environment. Students, at the very least, need to click into the lecture to access it online. In a larger sense, instructors are able to incorporate much more interaction into lectures online than they may be able to do in person. During an asynchronous online learning lecture students have the liberty of being able to pause, stop, or rewind the video or audio, or they can go back and re-read a text lecture. This gives students more control over how much information they are taking in at one time and allows them the freedom to take more time with complicated concepts if needed.

Instructors can also incorporate links to outside websites or online sources that support the material being learned so that the student can take a “side journey” while watching or reading through the lecture materials. For the lecture technique to be most effective, the instructor needs to have a good understanding of the material they want to present. Brewer, DeJonge, and Stout recommend that the instructor effectively prepare ahead of time by doing some research to make sure they understand the concept and then they encourage instructors to create an outline for the lecture. They say, “There are no walk-in lectures in online learning” (2001). The outline will not only help guide the instructor while creating the lecture, but instructors should make the outline available to students so they can understand what they are about to learn and return back to it as checkpoint for their learning. Most students can only absorb a limited amount of information in one lesson or sitting so it is encouraged to stick to two to four main ideas in any single lecture. When dealing with more complicated ideas this may be limited to one or two and can be up to three or four with less complicated concepts. As Gagne recommended, it is a good idea to inform the students of the objectives of the lecture in the beginning. “Audiences listen better and retain more when they know what to watch for and what the purpose is” (Brewer, 2001). Repetition is
also an important tool for retention so instructors are encouraged to repeat the objectives and key points throughout the online lecture. Within the online learning environment, relationship building is much more difficult than it is in a face to face classroom. In order for instructors to help the students see their personality, the instructor can use conversational styles when lecturing. They are also encouraged to incorporate personal and relevant stories, anecdotes, or comments to help the students see the human side of the instructor. On the flip side, the instructor should know their audience and students well enough to avoid jargon and words that they are unfamiliar with as well as tailoring the lecture to the students’ level. When the instructor is lecturing they should include their level of enthusiasm for the material being covered. “If the presenter demonstrates a high level of enthusiasm, the audience will tap into this energy and be encouraged to listen” (Brewer, 2001). In audio and video recordings, this can be as easy as changing the inflection in the instructor's voice while speaking. In a text lecture this can be a bit more difficult. Brewer, DeJonge, and Stout recommend changing the print, font color, or including a cartoon or graphic (2001). Instructors are also encouraged to incorporate multiple formats into the lecture to keep the material engaging. During a text lecture it may be beneficial to include a video clip for the students to watch or an audio podcast for them to listen to that helps to relay the information. A lecture on its own is a great way to relay information to the students but can and should be taken a step further in order to engage students and assess learning. Once the lecture is completed the instructor may ask the students to interact with each other and the material or apply the material learned in some way. An instructor could conclude the lecture with a group discussion, questions, role-playing, case studies, or simulations, each of which is explored in greater detail below. (Brewer, 2001, p. 65-79)
**Demonstrations in an online environment.** “Demonstration is a teaching method for visually presenting and explaining a sequential process or facts and concepts” (Brewer, 2001, p.83). This type of content delivery system allows students the opportunity to observe a process, task, or performance completed by the instructor. With new technology, the easiest way to do this is with video, but this can also be done through text with images, or audio. Demonstration can easily be done synchronously or asynchronously. Webcasting or online meetings are used in both the business world and the education world to instruct and demonstrate synchronously. As far as asynchronous methods of content delivery, there is an ever expanding pool of applications that can assist instructors. Applications like Screencastify allow the instructor to capture video of their computer screen and anything they do on the screen. This can be a great demonstration tool. Others, like science experiments, cannot be easily captured on a computer screen, but most computers come with a webcam that can record active demonstrations in the real world. Because students learn in a variety of ways, demonstration can appeal to those students who don’t learn well from lecture or other text based learning methods. In the online environment, these demonstrations are not able to be as hands on as they are in the traditional classroom, but if the student is provided with, or already has, the needed materials, demonstration can be a great way for the student to get the hands-on experience. A demonstration in the asynchronous online learning environment is usually recorded and can be recorded in many different attempts, but preparation is always crucial in education. Students should also have access to the full procedure so that they may follow along as the demonstration goes. Once the teacher has completed the demonstration, there should be an opportunity for the student to apply the knowledge they have just gained. This “allows the participant to practice what he or she has heard or seen during the presenter’s demonstration” (Brewer, 2001, p. 88). This would be the “you do” step of gradual
release of responsibility and should allow the student an opportunity to work on their own. A demonstration, much like the lecture, can be integrated into other methods of content delivery. Using a demonstration during a lecture can be an extremely effective way to instruct students but needs to be properly planned out, engaging, to the point, and cover all key steps. (Brewer, 2001, p.83-93)

**Group discussions.** A group discussion in the online classroom environment can be just as effective, engaging, and exciting as it is in the face-to-face classroom. A benefit of the online classroom discussion is that everyone can have a chance to speak without fear of being talked over or not called on. All students are able to see each other’s opinions and provide their own. In a face-to-face classroom, a discussion can be an intimidating place for a shy or anxious student, but in the online environment, much of the stress is gone and they are free to express themselves. A group discussion can serve many purposes. A discussion is an effective tool for helping students to verbalize their own opinions as well as to help them be aware of the differing and diverse opinions of others. It can also help students to see other sides and nuances of a topic or idea that they may not have otherwise thought of on their own. In the online environment especially, group discussion can provide students with a sense of community and connections to both students and the instructor (if the instructor chooses to participate) and can also provide cohesion and trust amongst the participants. When conducting the group discussion in the online classroom, the instructor should introduce a topic that all students are familiar with and should be accompanied by an objective so that students understand the goal of the discussion. The instructor poses questions to start the discussion, choosing questions that are open ended, engage controversy, and spark creative thought. Sparking discussion can also be done through prompts that elicit responses from students’ personal lives. Generally, the instructor is only active in the
beginning of the discussion and lets the students discuss amongst themselves but instructors can work within the discussion to make sure students are staying on track and being appropriate in their discussion. The instructor can also help to spur on a discussion that is not moving forward on its own. The instructor needs to be careful, though, so as not to control the discussion. This method is a great way for students to interact with each other and the information they are learning, but instructors need to remember that this is not a forum for content delivery. The information presented from the students is valuable but is usually opinion rather than fact. (Brewer, 2001, p. 107-120)

**Questioning as an interaction method.** Questioning is a varied method of online interaction. The questions can come from the instructor or from students but the idea is that the questions prompt students to think deeper on a given lesson or learning objective. The questions can focus on factual answers as well since this is the basis needed for the higher level questions. The deeper thinking questions, those on the higher end of Bloom’s taxonomy, can only be understood and answered by students who are able to answer basic knowledge questions (Forehand, 2005). Asking all of these questions can also provide the instructor with feedback as to how much the students understand. Questioning in the online classroom environment is very similar to that of a face-to-face classroom teaching strategy. Questions can be used to review previous learning, assess prior knowledge, promote understanding, or to help participants think deeply. The instructor should take the time to thoughtfully prepare questions that help students in whatever objective the instructor has set forth. This questioning should also spur the students to further research or questions of their own. (Brewer, 2001, p. 123-139)
**Gamification.** Gamification, or game based learning, consists of learning done in a game play context where learners are presented with scenarios that they navigate while using or gaining new learning. In the 1980’s computer learning games like this were much more simplistic like Number Munchers (Figure 2) or Word Munchers (Figure 1). Word Munchers asked students to identify words that started with a certain letter, or had a certain pronunciation or spelling. Number Munchers was its sequel in which students were asked to do basic math to gain points and defeat levels. Due to the development of technology, online learning games have also developed and become much more sophisticated. Even though they have come a long way in their development, the principles of online learning games has stayed the same. Applying elements of gaming to the non-gaming content can help to make learning more fun and engaging. “In other words, [gamification is] the use of game mechanics to encourage learners to explore and learn as they move toward an end goal” (Legault, n.d.). One element that can be incorporated into the online classroom is the use of narrative. Many games are popular because of their use of plot. They usually have a protagonist and antagonist that are at odds with each other. In the online classroom, the instructor can provide students with a scenario that includes characters and plot. The students could even become one of the characters in the scenario, and play out the scenario as the character. In
games, players have much of the control over the outcome of the plot, and they make choices that affect that outcome. This can also be incorporated into the online classroom through the use of student chosen avatars (an icon or figure that represents a person) or to give students control as to how they progress through the unit, lessons, or scenario. By giving them choice, and avoiding a linear path, students feel in control and engaged with their learning. This also gives students the opportunity to retry, revisit, or replay aspects of the course. This is much like in a game with “checkpoints”, or points at which the game saves and, even if the character dies, they can start back at the checkpoint rather than from the beginning of the game. This is called continuous play. Players can pick up where they left off and not have to start back at the beginning each time. So, even if a student does poorly on an assignment, quiz, or test they can go back and try again without going all the way back to the beginning of the course. Another aspect of gaming that can be incorporated into the online classroom is discovery. Games often encourage exploration and discovery and will have hidden objects for gamers to find. Instructors can include this by offering little bits of extra information to be found or extra points for completion of hidden tasks. It is important to note that you don’t want to have the hidden information be critical to the learning expected to take place and it should not be so hard to find that students spend too much time looking for it and not focusing on the larger learning.

Interactivity is an essential aspect of classroom learning as well as gaming and can be incorporated into the online classroom through the demonstration, group discussion, case studies and questioning as mentioned above. Instructors should know that having students complete “clicks” is not considered interactivity. Instructors should aim to truly engage their students and craft interactions to think and make decisions. For example, the instructor could show the steps of a demonstration and then have the students put the steps in order on their own after the
demonstration. Feedback is another aspect of gaming that is also shown to be essential in learning. In games, the feedback can consist of “unlocking” levels or new features or gaining achievements. Badges, levels, and checkpoints can all be used in the online classroom as a way to provide feedback to the students about their progress and success. An example could be having levels that unlock when learners advance rather than modules or chapters. The final, and biggest, aspect is that of competition. Many games are based entirely on beating someone else in order to win. In a classroom a teacher could use a leader board to help motivate students but should be careful to not embarrass those with lower scores. An idea would be to display just the top three each week so that no one knows any of the other scores of the low-scoring students.

As with all methods of online learning, game based learning must be well thought out and prepared ahead of time. (Legault, n.d.)

**Student Engagement in the Online Learning Environment**

In the online learning environment, students can lose touch with the sense of community that comes with a face-to-face classroom experience. In a study done by Wendt and Rockinson-Szapkiw they found that “students who participated in the face-to-face classroom had higher overall sense of community and learning community than students who participated in collaborative activities in the online environment” (2015). With this information in mind, instructors need to take extra care in attempting to engage their students in the learning as well as attempting to create a collaborative environment. Collaboration, any activity in which two or more people work together towards a common goal, has been shown to be an effective strategy in the traditional classroom so in the online classroom, this should be effective as well. There are many tools currently at the disposal of instructors to assist in collaborative activities. In addition to the group discussions discussed above, tools such as blogs, social media, email, and group chat rooms allow students to interact with their classmates as well as the wider world. Tools such
as these allow students to get to know each other better and, when used effectively, can improve the quality and engagement of online learning environments. “Researchers have found that student engagement increased when computers are used as a set of classroom tools and not as the primary tool, [...] when the computer was presented as a tool for exploration and experimentation” (Clark, 2005). In a blended online classroom, this type of computer and online usage can be done quite easily. Rather than having a computer program teach the students the content, students become more engaged and motivated when the information comes from the instructor and the computer is used as a supplement. In an entirely online learning environment, this can be more difficult, but can and should be done. If students are not invested and engaged in the method of instruction, learning may be slowed and more difficult for the students.

Summary

In attempting to create an effective blended online classroom, an instructor needs to take into consideration the advances in technology that have provided educators with better and varied methods of online instruction and that have made the online classroom into an ideal environment for students who struggle in a traditional face-to-face classroom. Many people, instructors and students included, have negative opinions about online education, but with preparation and thoughtful implementation, an instructor can create an environment that is conducive to learning as well as exciting for the students. The previous chapter explored the research available on online learning and its successful implementation. Many methods of instruction were researched and will be used in the development and implementation of the blended middle school language arts curriculum created for this study. Using these methods and the research explored on engagement, the curriculum should be able to effectively engage and motivate students to help spur their learning as well as effectively meet the standards set forth by the state of Minnesota.
In the next chapter, the methods used to develop this curriculum will be explained including the research paradigm that will be used in curriculum creation, the setting in which the curriculum will be implemented, and the students who will be learning from and interacting with the curriculum.
CHAPTER THREE

Methods

Overview

In order to create an online curriculum that best facilitates student learning, it is important to consider how that curriculum is created, the setting and students the curriculum is created for, and the current methods being discussed in the language arts community. Understanding by Design or Backwards Design is the method of curriculum development that is gaining popularity in the educational realm and focuses on the objectives and outcomes of lessons and units rather than the specific learning tasks. Kelly Gallagher, a dominant researcher in the language arts field, has suggested many shifts in the way language arts is taught and is part of the foundation of the curriculum being developed in this study.

Research Paradigm

As the question that I am attempting to answer is so broad, I chose to take the research already available on online learning and attempt to apply it to my curriculum and my current classroom. I plan to use my previous knowledge about the Understanding by Design curriculum model to help guide my lesson development. Understanding by Design focuses on a backward design model, which means that rather than focusing on the task or learning experience we want

![UbD: Stages of Backward Design](image)

Figure 3: UbD: Stages of Backwards Design (McTighe, 2004, p.12).
students to complete, instructors focus on the desired results and essential questions to help guide the learning experiences. The backwards design model is made up of three stages: identifying desired results, determining acceptable evidence, and planning learning experiences and instruction.

To begin, the instructor needs to think about what they want the students to know, understand, or be able to do. There are four categories to focus on in this stage. The first category is established goals. This category asks the instructor to think about the standards of their state/district/school and/or the learner objectives of their state/district/school and select one or multiple goals that the lesson or unit will address. The second category is enduring understandings and asks the instructor to write a full sentence stating “what we want students to come to understand about the big ideas” (McTighe, 2004, p. 60). Category three is the essential questions. Instructors should create open ended questions that are specifically designed to guide the student’s inquiry and focus, and instruction should help them to uncover the big ideas of the content. The final category is knowledge and skills. These are the most targeted objectives that we want students to know and be able to do. Many districts have acronyms that address these knowledge and skills like SWBAT (Students will be able to), WALT (We are learning to), or WILF (What I’m looking for), but all are addressing the same aspect of the backwards design framework. See Appendix A for a template that helps to guide the backwards design process and includes the four categories of identifying desired results.

In stage two, when determining acceptable evidence, the instructor is looking to identify acceptable assessment evidence for determining if the students have achieved the desired results. Instructors need to think about performance tasks and rubrics, other evidence, and self assessments that can provide them with a broad view of student understanding. There should not
be one single assessment to determine student understanding. The instructor should be sure that the type or format of the assessment matches the desired results. For example, “if the goal is for students to learn basic facts and skills, [then] paper-and-pencil tests and quizzes generally provide adequate [...] measures. However, when the goal is deep understanding, we rely on more complex performances to determine whether our goal has been reached” (McTighe, 2004, pg. 141).

In Appendix B there are samples of performance tasks based on the six facets of understanding. The six facets of understanding include explain, interpret, apply, perspective, empathy, and self-knowledge.

Instructors are encouraged to use the GRASPS form for constructing a performance task. GRASPS stands for goal, role, audience, situation, product performance and purpose, and standards and criteria for success. In Appendix C there is a worksheet to help instructors to construct a performance task using the GRASPS method. The template in Appendix A also has a section to help instructors in planning the evidence they will gather. In stage three, the learning plan stage, the instructor considers the specific strategies and experiences needed to
achieve the desired goals and results. In stage three the acronym WHERE TO can help instructors identify key elements to consider when designing the learning plan. WHERE TO stands for WHERE are the students going, HOOK the students, opportunities to EXPLORE and EXPERIENCE, opportunities to RETHINK, REVISE and REFINE, opportunities to EVALUATE, TAILOR the lesson to students, and ORGANIZE to maximize effectiveness.

Setting

Cyber Village Academy (CVA) is a charter school located in the Highland Park area of Saint Paul, Minnesota. The school building itself is owned and shared with the Talmud Torah School of St. Paul. This means that CVA only occupies a portion of the building. CVA’s high school takes up the classrooms in the basement, the middle school is based on the second floor, and the combined elementary classes occupy a few rooms on the first floor. In recent years the school has been expanding greatly and has been working with Talmud Torah to have access to more classrooms within the building. At the end of the 2015-2016 school year CVA had an enrollment of 262 students in both the in-class and fully online programs. This is a 65.8% increase from the 2013-2014 school year and the 2016-2017 school year is expected to have about 280 students in both programs. As the student body grows, so does the staff population. During the 2015-2016 school year there were 36 staff members and for the 2016-2017 school year there will be approximately 41 staff members. The school is growing at a fast pace but is still small compared to many public schools. Each in-class grade is capped at 25 students to keep class sizes at a reasonable capacity. This means that teachers are generally teaching multiple grades during the day and all teach multiple classes. In the middle school, each teacher teaches a 45-minute class to fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth grade. In the high school, the classes are not necessarily based on grade, but each teacher does teach multiple different classes throughout the day. In addition to
each of these classes, teachers are also responsible for online courses as well. More on the two
different programs is discussed below.

CVA prides itself on being academically rigorous while still providing students with a
comfortable and nurturing learning environment. The small school environment is ideal for
students who do not fit the traditional school mold and has a well deserved motto: ‘We love
quirky kids!” Many of the students who come to CVA have struggled in a traditional school
setting for one reason or another. Some come to CVA for its flexibility, others for its great
special education department, and still others who are just looking for something different.
Students at CVA feel that they get the attention they need from staff members as well as a calm
and respectful environment in which to learn. The staff at CVA prides themselves on their ability
to accommodate and support students who cannot or do not want to fit into the traditional mold
of schooling.

Cyber Village Academy offers students 2 unique programs: the Fusion program and the
PASCAL program.

**Fusion Program.** The Fusion program at Cyber Village Academy, for grades kindergarten
through twelve, is unique to this school and “to our knowledge, remains unique in the United
States” (Cyber Village Academy, 2015). In the Fusion program, students come to school on
Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday and are in the classroom, much like in a traditional school.
On Thursdays and Fridays, students complete work online either from home or from the on-site
study center. The work students do online is equivalent to the work they would be doing in the
classroom but can be done at their own pace at home. Students are learning valuable technology
skills as well as organization, time management, and self motivation. Staff are on campus on
Thursdays and Fridays and are available to students for support in their classes. Staff are also
able to have meetings on Thursdays and Fridays which can help reduce the stress that early morning or late afternoon meetings can cause. “The Fusion program appeals to students and families who want the flexibility of an online program, the group interaction of an on-campus learning environment, and the personal attention that a small school can offer” (Cyber Village Academy, 2015).

**PASCAL Program.** The Program for Accelerated Studies Using Computer Assisted Learning (PASCAL) is a fully online program offered by Cyber Village Academy for students in grades six through twelve. Each online PASCAL course is led by the same teachers that are teaching the Fusion program so students and parents know that they are still getting the same high quality education that is offered in the Fusion program. Students have the flexibility of being able to go at their own pace (while still meeting attendance requirements) and being able to work when and where they choose. These students are always invited and involved in large school activities such as field trips and field days and are encouraged to come into study center on Thursdays or Fridays or communicate with teachers as much as possible. Students in this program make up about 30% of the student population and are just as much a part of the CVA community as the Fusion students.

Technology based learning makes up about 40% of how the Fusion students learn and 100% of how the PASCAL students learn. Because online learning is such a large part of the school and the learning experience for these students, this curriculum focus is important in making sure students are getting the most effective and engaging education possible.

**Participants**

The participants in this study will be the eighth grade students in the Fusion and PASCAL programs at Cyber Village Academy. Fusion students come to school on Mondays, Tuesdays,
and Wednesdays and complete coursework online on Thursdays and Fridays. PASCAL participants are online 100% of the time and occasionally come to the CVA campus for additional support on Thursdays and Fridays. All of these students have been to previous schools in the past, for elementary school at least, and have chosen to come to CVA using their open enrollment option in Minnesota. All students are residents of the state of Minnesota, but are not necessarily all from the St. Paul area. There are twenty-two students in the 2016-2017 eighth grade Fusion Program and ten in the 2016-2017 eighth grade PASCAL program. 60% of the students in the PASCAL program have individualized education plans (IEP’s) which means they are receiving special education services. 41% of the Fusion students have IEP’s and receive special education services. In the Fusion program, 41% of students identify as a non-Caucasian nationality and 40% of the PASCAL students identify as a non-Caucasian nationality. All of these factors are important to consider when creating any curriculum or classroom environment and have an impact on the curriculum made here as well.

Methods

In education currently, “a focus on [No Child Left Behind] requirements has shifted to the [Common Core State Standards] (or other standards). [...] Whole-class, blanket instruction is shifting to differentiated instruction. Professional development is shifting from traditional workshops to virtual learning and to social media. Traditional books are being replaced by e-readers” (Gallagher, 2015, p. 189-190). Shift is happening in the educational sphere and online learning is becoming more predominant as well. In the language arts realm, Kelly Gallagher has been a standout, producing books, conferences, and videos that help guide language arts instruction. He believes in the best interest of students and that instructors need to focus on the larger elements of reading, writing, speaking, and listening rather than on the specific standards.
In his most recent book, he proposes that by focusing on these larger elements instructors will be addressing the standards without “teaching to the test” or sacrificing the quality of their instruction. He also suggests that students are currently reading literature that is too difficult. Teachers encourage whole class novels that are challenging, but don’t give a lot of time for students to read books that are less difficult. Because of this, when students do have time to read anything they choose (like sustained silent reading or free reading time) they tend to choose books that are far too simplistic and easy. Gallagher posits that while we should be challenging our students to read harder material, we need to encourage them to choose novels that are at their level.

In an endeavor to both focus on the large scale aspects of language arts and provide students with an opportunity to self-select grade level texts Gallagher suggests following the 20/80 approach. The idea is that students are working with whole-class core-works for 20% of the year and the other 80% is made up of extended reading, club reading, and independent reading. Extended reading consists of books and readings that are related to the core work read in class. Usually the extension novel is chosen from a list provided by the teacher, but as they get better identifying what kinds of novels extend their learning, they may be able to select from a larger context like a school library. This can be done in small groups or the novels can be chosen individually by students. Club reading is much like literature circles but the students select what they will read. Gallagher says, “The goal [...] behind the shift to the 20/80 Approach is to give [...] students a lot more experience reading in the zone found between ‘too easy’ and ‘too hard’”
Below is a table showing how the 20/80 approach would work if it were to be implemented in a perfect world known as “Nirvana High School”. This 20/80 approach is a major part of the curriculum being developed for this study and underpins how the novels are spaced, assigned, and selected.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggested Timetable for a Student’s Reading Year at Nirvana High School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weeks 2-4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weeks 5-7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weeks 8-11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weeks 12-14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weeks 15-17</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weeks 18-20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weeks 21-23</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weeks 24-27</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weeks 28-32</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weeks 33-35</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weeks 36-38</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weeks 39-40</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Summary**

In this chapter the Understanding by Design curriculum development method was reviewed as it is the method that will be used to develop the curriculum for this study. This chapter also provided an overview of Cyber Village Academy and its students to gain a better perspective of the way in which this curriculum will be implemented. Finally, new shifts in the field of
language arts were reviewed as they will also be used in the creation and implementation of the curriculum for this study.

In the next chapter a sample unit from the eighth grade curriculum is reviewed. This curriculum has been created utilizing the methods laid out in this chapter as well as the online teaching techniques and concepts laid out in the literature review (chapter two).
CHAPTER FOUR

Curriculum

Overview

Utilizing the online learning techniques researched in the literature review and the Understanding by Design model of curriculum development, I have created a curriculum centered on the novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* that attempts to facilitate online learning in the best way possible. This novel is used in most middle and/or high schools around the United States of America and is read by thousands of students a year. I teach this novel with my eighth grade class and, in the past, have used comprehension questions and worksheets to accompany the novel. As I have learned throughout my research and conversations with other language arts teachers, this is not a satisfactory way to help students learn language arts skills or standards. Many times, students come away with a basic understanding of the novel, rather than a deeper understanding of the symbols, characters, and resonating themes of the novel, all of which can still be applied to life today. My hope for my students is that they will come away from this novel not only understanding that the issues of growing up, prejudice, and racism are still relevant today, but so is the novel itself. If this novel is still beneficial to our modern day society, fifty seven years after it was written, then there may be other books from the past that are worthwhile as well. Too many times students see an older novel and assume that it will be boring or not relevant to them because it was not written recently and I want to break down this wall for them and help them to understand why classic novels are considered classic. These concepts are can be seen in my desired results for the curriculum, which, in turn, dictates the direction the rest of the curriculum will take.

Curriculum creation
In creating this curriculum, I incorporated many of the techniques described in the literature review (chapter two). The idea that I made sure was in the forefront of my mind, however, was not a specific technique, but a concept described in the literature review. Students may come to CVA with an idea that online days are like days off from school, so I needed to make sure that these days were not solely focused on reading and response like they have been in the past. Rather, I needed to help the students feel like they were getting the same amount of new learning and practice of concepts that they would have received had they been in a classroom. As I said in my introduction, this was a struggle for me throughout my first year of teaching, so it was always at the front of my mind in creating this new curriculum. After thinking about making the online days more like in-class days, the question was “how?” The techniques in the literature review then became my focus. I began with Gagne’s nine events of instruction. In my online lessons, 

![Figure 6: Sample online assignment page](image)
grabbing students’ attention needed to happen quickly so I have been using pictures to assist in this area. As you can see in figure six, the image is quite prominent and, my hope is that students are intrigued by the image enough to continue reading the assignment requirements, but to also get excited about the assignment. The other aspects of Gagne’s nine events of instruction also play a large role in the assignment page as well. I make sure that the learning objectives are up front and in student friendly language so they know what their goal is. In presenting new information to the students, I incorporated many of the techniques discussed in the literature review. I know that lecture is a necessary part of teaching new information to students and that many students, and instructors, find lecture tedious and boring. However, I quite enjoyed making videos for the lecture parts of instruction and I think that that enthusiasm helps students get excited about the content as well. Demonstrations were also easily done in a video format and provided the students with a step by step approach to completing the learning task.

Asynchronous discussions are used throughout the unit to help students learn from one another, specifically about the text the unit focuses on. Gamification was a tricky element to implement in my online classroom. As I do not have the skills or tools to create a game like Word Munchers, I chose to incorporate board game elements into the learning of grammar concepts. While there is still a linear process to the gaining of the skills, students are able to earn points, move along the board, and move at their own pace through the content. My plan is to have the grade levels compete to see who can win the most points each quarter through this grammar game. I have also incorporated blogging as a way for students to get to know and collaborate with one another. This unit is usually the last one I teach in the school year, so students will already be utilizing the blogging platform for other units and will have already become comfortable with the technology and, hopefully, with each other through this learning technique. Combining all of the techniques
presented in the literature review and the curriculum development method laid out in chapter three, I have created the following unit utilizing Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

**Fusion Unit Overview**

**Stage 1 - Identifying Desired Results**

| Established Goals: |  
|-------------------|---
| 8.4.2.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text, including those by and about Minnesota American Indians, 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” (Minnesota Department of Education, 2010, p. 50) |  
| 8.7.2.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.  
  a. Introduce a topic clearly, previewing what is to follow; organize ideas, concepts, and information into broader categories, include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., charts, tables), and multimedia when useful on aiding comprehension.  
  b. Develop the topic with relevant, well chosen facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.  
  c. Use appropriate and varied transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.  
  d. Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.  
  e. Establish and maintain a formal style.  
  f. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented. (Minnesota Department of Education, 2010, p. 59-60) |  
| 8.11.2.2 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.  
  a. Use punctuation (comma, ellipsis, dash) to indicate a pause or break.  
  b. Use an ellipsis to indicate an omission. (Minnesota Department of Education, 2010, p. 73) |  
| **Enduring Understandings:** |  
| Students will understand that… |  
|  
  ● Classic novels are classics because their themes are still relevant to today’s society  
  ● Everyone has both good and evil inside of them |  
| The people we surround ourselves with and the places we choose to frequent affect our beliefs and values |
**Essential Questions:**
- What is a theme and how do we find the theme in literature?
- Why should we read classic novels?
- Why are English conventions important in our writing?
- How are people affected by their relationships with others?
- How do the places we live and the people we surround ourselves with affect our beliefs and values?
- How can prejudice lead to injustice?
- How can people be blind to their own prejudice and bias?
- How can good and evil exist in the same person?

**Knowledge and Skills:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students will know…</th>
<th>Students will be able to…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- The plot and characters in <em>To Kill a Mockingbird</em>&lt;br&gt;- What a Theme is&lt;br&gt;- What Prejudice and Bias are</td>
<td>- Identify a theme in a novel&lt;br&gt;- Apply the writing process to produce a draft of an informative essay&lt;br&gt;- Correctly use commas, dashes, and ellipses&lt;br&gt;- Assess their own prejudice and bias as well as the prejudice and bias in our modern world</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Stage 2 - Determine Acceptable Evidence**

**Formative Assessments**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exit Tickets</th>
<th>Exit tickets are written student responses to questions posed at the end of a class or learning activity or at the end of a day. (Lambert, 2012)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One Minute Essay</td>
<td>A one-minute essay question (or one-minute question) is a focused question with a specific goal that can, in fact, be answered within a minute or two. (Lambert, 2012)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>Walk around the classroom and observe students as they work to check for learning. (Lambert, 2012)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Assessment</td>
<td>A process in which students collect information about their own learning, analyze what it reveals about their progress toward the intended learning goals and plan the next steps in their learning. (Lambert, 2012)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close Reads</td>
<td>Students will read and annotate a section of the novel and attempt to identify the theme that is apparent in that section of the novel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Think-Pair-Share</td>
<td>Teacher gives direction to students. Students formulate individual response, and then turn to a partner to share their answers. Teacher calls on several</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
random pairs to share their answers with the class. (Lambert, 2012)

| **KWL** | Students respond as whole group, small group, or individually to a topic as to “What they already Know, what they want to learn, what they have learned”. PLUS (+) asks students to organize their new learning using a concept map or graphic organizer that reflects the key information. Then, each student writes a summary paragraph about what they have learned. (Lambert, 2012) |
| **Anticipation Guide** | Students will fill in their opinions about various topics or statements and will revisit these same topics or statements at the end of the unit to see if their opinions have changed over the course of the unit |

### Summative Assessments

| **Grammar Game Board** | Students will practice and review grammar topics as they move about the game board preparing for the final grammar exam (Appendix D) |
| **Quizzes** | Quizzes assess students for factual information, concepts and discrete skill. There is usually a single best answer. |
| **Reading Response Journal Blog Posts** | Students will identify sections of the novel that jump out at them as they read and respond to the novel. (Appendix E) |
| **Theme Analysis Essay** | Students will write a formal informative essay responding to the questions “Why is To Kill a Mockingbird still important to read today, 57 years after it was written? What can we still learn from this book?” (Appendix F) |

### Stage 3 - Learning Experiences and Instruction

**Unit at a Glance**

| **Week 1: Day 1** | **Due Today:** **Activities:** A Day in the Life of the Working Poor: Students will work with a partner to make a shopping list and menu for a family of 4 living during the Great Depression for 1 day. After the activity, we will have a discussion as a class about the difficulties they encountered and what tough choices they had to make. (Modified from lesson by Laura Randazzo) |
| **Monday** | **April 9** |
**Assessments:** Formative: Teacher Observation/Class Discussion

**Homework Tonight:** Write up a reflection of the experience. How would you feel living in the Great Depression?

**Day 2**
**Tuesday**
**April 10**

**Due Today:** A day in the life of the working poor reflection

**Activities:** We will be watching videos about the author, and the setting of the novel to gain a better understanding of the time and place in which the characters lived. Students will be completing a video response sheet as they watch the videos. (Appendix G)

Harper Lee: [https://www.biography.com/people/harper-lee-9377021](https://www.biography.com/people/harper-lee-9377021)

Great Depression: [http://www.history.com/topics/great-depression](http://www.history.com/topics/great-depression)

Great Depression Rap: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tFu7us6bNSQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tFu7us6bNSQ)


We will hand out novels and go over the essential questions for the unit

**Assessments:** Formative: Video response sheet

**Homework Tonight:** Complete Video Response sheet if not finished in class

---

**Day 3**
**Wednesday**
**April 11**

**Due Today:** Video Response Sheet

**Activities:** Introduce Grammar Board Game (Appendix D)

Introduce Final Informative Essay (Appendix F)

Then we will begin reading Chapter 1 as a class. After a short time of reading, we will have a class discussion recappping what we have learned so far so that I may check for student understanding.

**Assessments:** Formative: Teacher observation/Discussion

**Homework Tonight:** Begin reading

---

**Day4/5**
**Thursday/Friday**
**April 12/13**

**Due Today:** None

**Activities:** Read Chapters 1–4 for Monday

Complete Reading Response Blog Post (Modified from lesson from 50 Common Core Reading Response Activities by Marilyn Pryle)


Begin Grammar Board Game and complete at your own pace

**Assessments:** Reading Response Journal Blog

Grammar Board Game

**Homework Tonight:** Above is due Monday

---

**Week 2: Day 6**
**Monday**
**April 16**

**Due Today:** Reading of Chapters 1–4

**Activities:** Class fishbowl discussion of Chapters 1–4 (Fishbowl Discussion Guidelines included in Appendix H)

**Assessments:** Teacher Observation of discussion

**Homework Tonight:** Read Chapter 5

---

**Day7**
**Tuesday**
**April 17**

**Due Today:** Chapter 5 Reading

**Activities:** Chapter 5 One-Question Quizzer (One Question Quizzers included in Appendix I)
### Day 8
**Wednesday**
**April 18**

**Due Today:** Response Sheet  
Chapter 6 Reading  
**Activities:** Chapter 6 One-Question Quizzer  
In class we will watch a video on how to identify theme:  
[https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B1hS7-eoIoT1LUQybHpYZUVrNHM/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B1hS7-eoIoT1LUQybHpYZUVrNHM/view?usp=sharing)  
After watching the video, students will practice this skill with children’s books. Each student will pick a random children’s picture book, read through it, and try to identify a theme. Once they are done, we will do a whip share, where each student will share the theme they found. I will be helping those whose theme does not seem to be an actual theme so that by the end, we will have heard at least 20 themes as examples.  
**Assessments:** Chapter 6 One-Question Quizzer  
Teacher observation of Whip Share of theme  
**Homework Tonight:** None

### Day 9/10
**Thursday/Friday**
**April 19/20**

**Due Today:** None  
**Activities:** Read Chapters 5-9 for Monday  
Complete Reading Response Blog Post (Modified from lesson from 50 Common Core Reading Response Activities by Marilyn Pryle)  
**Assessments:** Reading Response Journal  
Grammar Board Game  
**Homework Tonight:** Above is due Monday

### Week 3: Day 11
**Monday**
**April 23**

**Due Today:** Reading of Chapters 5-9  
**Activities:** Class fishbowl discussion of Chapters 5-9  
**Assessments:** Teacher Observation of discussion  
**Homework Tonight:** Read Chapter 10

### Day 12
**Tuesday**
**April 24**

**Due Today:** Chapter 10 Reading  
**Activities:** Chapter 10 One-Question Quizzer  
We will begin class by going over how to identify a theme again. Then we will talk about how to annotate and note their thoughts as they read. As a model, we will annotate a passage from Chapter 2 as a class and then decide on a theme for that passage.  
Students will then do this work on their own with a passage from Chapter
### Day 13
**Wednesday**
**April 25**

**Due Today:** Chapter 11 Reading  
**Activities:** Chapter 11 One-Question Quizzer  
We will go over the final essay again and work on how to introduce a topic for an informative essay, organize their ideas using an outline, and use precise language  
**Assessments:** Chapter 11 One-Question Quizzer  
**Homework Tonight:** None

### Day 14/15
**Thursday/Friday**  
**April 26/27**

**Due Today:** None  
**Activities:** Read Chapters 10-14 for Monday  
Complete Reading Response Blog Post (Modified from lesson from 50 Common Core Reading Response Activities by Marilyn Pryle)  
**Assessments:** Reading Response Journal  
Grammar Board Game  
**Homework Tonight:** Above is due Monday

### Week 4: Day 16
**Monday**
**April 30**

**Due Today:** Reading of Chapters 10-14  
**Activities:** Class fishbowl discussion of Chapters 10-14  
**Assessments:** Teacher Observation of discussion  
**Homework Tonight:** Read Chapter 15

### Day 17
**Tuesday**
**May 1**

**Due Today:** Chapter 15 Reading  
**Activities:** Chapter 15 One-Question Quizzer  
We will read through the poem “Learning to Read” by Francis Ellen Watkins Harper and students will answer the text-dependent questions on their own. (Appendix K) We will go over the answers once they have finished and then have a class discussion with questions that include:  
- Why didn’t the masters want the slaves to have knowledge?  
- What is the relationship between literacy (knowing how to read) and power?  
- What does this text teach us about prejudice and discrimination, education, and social mobility?  
- What is the significance of Calpurnia’s literacy and how education and race affect the social structure of Maycomb?  
- How does Calpurnia talk to and relate to other people at her church?  
- Compare and contrast this to the way she talks and relates to Jem and Scout. What are the similarities and the differences?  
**Assessments:** Chapter 15 One-Question Quizzer  
Text Dependent Questions  
Teacher observation of class discussion
| Day 18 Wednesday  
May 2 | **Homework Tonight:** Read Chapter 16  |
|---|---|
| **Due Today:** Chapter 16 Reading  
**Activities:** Chapter 16 One-Question Quizzer  |
| We will read through the poem “On Turning Ten” by Billy Collins and students will answer the text-dependent questions on their own. (Appendix L) We will go over the answers once they have finished and then have a class discussion with questions that include:  |
| - What does it mean to be ‘grown up’?  
- Do you think it is too early for the speaker to miss his youth? Why or why not?  
- Compare Jem's character, as a maturing boy, to that of the speaker in the poem. What does growing up mean to the two of them?  
How are the two impacted by their environments?  |
| **Assessments:** Chapter 16 One-Question Quizzer  
Text Dependent Questions  
Teacher observation of class discussion  |
| **Homework Tonight:** None  |

| Day 19/20 Thursday/Friday  
May 3/4 | **Due Today:** None  |
|---|---|
| **Activities:** Read Chapters 15-20 for Monday  
Complete Reading Response Blog Post (Modified from lesson from 50 Common Core Reading Response Activities by Marilyn Pryle)  |
| **Assessments:** Reading Response Journal  
Grammar Board Game  |
| **Homework Tonight:** Above is due Monday  |

| Week 5: Day 21 Monday  
May 7 | **Due Today:** Reading of Chapters 15-20  |
<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Activities:</strong> Class fishbowl discussion of Chapters 15-20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assessments:</strong> Teacher Observation of discussion</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Homework Tonight:</strong> Read Chapter 21</td>
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</table>

| Day 22 Tuesday  
May 8 | **Due Today:** Chapter 21 Reading  |
<table>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Activities:</strong> Chapter 21 One-Question Quizzer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students will meet with their table groups to discuss the feedback received on their last close reads about their theme development. After they meet and discuss, students will complete another close read of a passage from Chapter 15</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| **Assessments:** Chapter 21 One-Question Quizzer  
Chapter 15 Close read  |
| **Homework Tonight:** Read Chapter 22  |

| Day 23 Wednesday  
May 9 | **Due Today:** Chapter 22 Reading  |
<table>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Activities:</strong> Chapter 22 One-Question Quizzer</td>
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<tr>
<td>We will revisit the final essay and work on transitions and the conclusion for the essay.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Assessments:</strong> Chapter 22 One-Question Quizzer</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Day 24/25 | Due Today: None  
| Thursday/Friday | Activities: Read Chapters 21-25 for Monday  
| May 10/11 | Complete Reading Response Blog Post (Modified from lesson from 50 Common Core Reading Response Activities by Marilyn Pryle)  
| | Assessments: Reading Response Journal  
| | Grammar Board Game  
| | Homework Tonight: Above is due Monday |
| Week 6: Day 26 | Due Today: Reading of Chapters 21-25  
| Monday | Activities: Class fishbowl discussion of Chapters 21-25  
| May 14 | Assessments: Teacher Observation of discussion  
| | Homework Tonight: Read Chapter 26 |
| Day 27 | Due Today: Chapter 26 Reading  
| Tuesday | Activities: Chapter 26 One-Question Quizzer  
| May 15 | Students will meet with their table groups to discuss the feedback received on their last close reads about their theme development. After they meet and discuss, students will complete another close read of a passage from Chapter 23  
| | Assessments: Chapter 26 One-Question Quizzer  
| | Close read of Chapter 23  
| | Homework Tonight: Read Chapter 27 |
| Day 28 | Due Today: Chapter 27 Reading  
| Wednesday | Activities: Chapter 27 One-Question Quizzer  
| May 16 | We will read through the article “The Scottsboro Boys” by Jessica McBirney and students will answer the text-dependent questions on their own. (Appendix M) We will go over the answers once they have finished and then have a class discussion with questions that include:  
| | ● In your opinion, how are African Americans treated by the criminal justice system today? How have things improved and what do you think requires further attention?  
| | ● In the context of the passage, what are the effects of prejudice? How did prejudice drive the opinions and actions of those surrounding the Scottsboro Boys from the moment they boarded the train until their final pardons?  
| | ● Discuss the similarities and differences between the Scottsboro Trial and Tom Robinson’s trial.  
| | Assessments: Chapter 27 One-Question Quizzer  
| | Text Dependent Questions  
| | Teacher observation of class discussion  
<p>| | Homework Tonight: None |
| Day 29/30 | Due Today: None |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Due Today:</th>
<th>Activities:</th>
<th>Assessments:</th>
<th>Homework Tonight:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thursday/Friday</td>
<td>May 17/18</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Activities:</strong> Read Chapters 25-31 for Monday</td>
<td><strong>Assessments:</strong> Reading Response Blog Post</td>
<td>Above is due Monday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Complete Reading Response Blog Post (Modified from lesson from 50 Common Core Reading Response Activities by Marilyn Pryle)</td>
<td><strong>Grammar Board Game</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 7: Day 31</td>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>Due Today:</td>
<td><strong>Activities:</strong> Class fishbowl discussion of Chapters 25-31</td>
<td><strong>Assessments:</strong> Teacher Observation of discussion</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 32</td>
<td>May 21</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Activities:</strong> We will read through the speech “President Obama’s remarks on Trayvon Martin ruling” by Barack Obama and students will answer the text-dependent questions on their own. (Appendix N) We will go over the answers once they have finished and then have a class discussion with questions that include:</td>
<td><strong>Assessments:</strong> Text Dependent Questions</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>Due Today:</td>
<td>Have you seen discrimination around you or experienced it personally? How did you handle it?</td>
<td>Teacher observation of class discussion</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>May 22</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>In the context of this speech, what are the effects of prejudice?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Day 33</td>
<td></td>
<td>Do you agree with President Obama? Is the world slowly becoming a better place? What role will you play in making the world a better place?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td></td>
<td>How can the modern story shed light on America's history of race relations?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>May 23</td>
<td>No School</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 34/35</td>
<td>Thursday/Friday</td>
<td>Due Today:</td>
<td><strong>Activities:</strong> Students will post the rough draft of their essay to their blog</td>
<td><strong>Assessments:</strong> Formative assessment of rough draft</td>
<td>Above is due Monday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>May 24/25</td>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 8: Day 36</td>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>Due Today:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>May 28</td>
<td>No School</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 37</td>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>Due Today:</td>
<td><strong>Activities:</strong> We will read through the poem “An Obstacle” by Charlotte Perkins Gilman and students will answer the text-dependent questions on their own. (Appendix O) We will go over the answers once they have</td>
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</table>
finished and then have a class discussion with questions that include:
  • Consider the context of this work. What does this poem teach us about women and men in the late nineteenth century?
  • What does the author imply about the nature of prejudice in this poem? How does the author suggest one should react to prejudice?
  • In the context of this poem, how does a person overcome adversity?
  • Discuss how Scout is learning to overcome or dismiss prejudices regarding society's expectations for her as a woman.
  • Discuss what lessons can be taken from Gilman’s poem and applied to the prejudice that takes place throughout the novel.

**Assessments:** Text Dependent Questions
Teacher observation of class discussion

**Homework Tonight:** None

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day 38</th>
<th>Due Today:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday May 30</td>
<td><strong>Activities:</strong> Students will be assigned 2 partners and will need to go to each other’s blog. There they will read through the rough draft that was posted last week. They will then post their comments about the paper on the blog using the prompts provided. (Appendix P)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Assessments:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Homework Tonight:</strong> None</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day 39/40</th>
<th>Due Today:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thursday/Friday</td>
<td><strong>Activities:</strong> Students will finish and submit their final paper using the edits suggested by their peers. Students will also complete a self-assessment of their own writing, to be completed on their blog, using the prompts provided (Appendix Q)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 31/June 1</td>
<td><strong>Assessments:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Summative Assessment of final essay (Rubric Appendix F)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Homework Tonight:</strong> The above due Monday</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PASCAL Unit Overview**

**Stage 1 - Identifying Desired Results**

**Established Goals:**
8.4.2.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text, including those by and about Minnesota American Indians, 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” (Minnesota Department of Education, 2010, p. 50)

8.7.2.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content. a. Introduce a topic clearly, previewing what is to follow; organize ideas, concepts, and
information into broader categories, include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., charts, tables), and multimedia when useful on aiding comprehension.

b. Develop the topic with relevant, well chosen facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.

c. Use appropriate and varied transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.

d. Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.

e. Establish and maintain a formal style.

f. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented. (Minnesota Department of Education, 2010, p. 59-60)

8.11.2.2 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

a. Use punctuation (comma, ellipsis, dash) to indicate a pause or break.

b. Use an ellipsis to indicate an omission. (Minnesota Department of Education, 2010, p. 73)

Enduring Understandings:
Students will understand that…
- Classic novels are classics because their themes are still relevant to today’s society
- Everyone has both good and evil inside of them
- The people we surround ourselves with and the places we choose to frequent affect our beliefs and values

Essential Questions:
- What is a theme and how to we find the theme in literature?
- Why should we read classic novels?
- Why are English conventions important in our writing?
- How are people affected by their relationships with others?
- How do the places we live and the people we surround ourselves with affect our beliefs and values?
- How can prejudice lead to injustice?
- How can people be blind to their own prejudice and bias?
- How can good and evil exist in the same person?

Knowledge and Skills:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students will know…</th>
<th>Students will be able to…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The plot and characters in <em>To Kill a Mockingbird</em></td>
<td>Identify a theme in a novel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What a Theme is</td>
<td>Apply the writing process to produce a draft of an informative essay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What Prejudice and Bias are</td>
<td>Correctly use commas, dashes, and</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ellipses

• Assess their own prejudice and bias as well as the prejudice and bias in our modern world

## Stage 2 - Determine Acceptable Evidence

**Formative Assessments**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self Assessment</th>
<th>A process in which students collect information about their own learning, analyze what it reveals about their progress toward the intended learning goals and plan the next steps in their learning.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Close Reads</td>
<td>Students will read and annotate a section of the novel and attempt to identify the theme that is apparent in that section of the novel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KWL</td>
<td>Students respond as whole group, small group, or individually to a topic as to “What they already Know, what they want to learn, what they have learned”. PLUS (+) asks students to organize their new learning using a concept map or graphic organizer that reflects the key information. Then, each student writes a summary paragraph about what they have learned.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Summative Assessments**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grammar Quizzes</th>
<th>Students will practice and review grammar topics and take quizzes to assess learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Comprehension Quizzes</td>
<td>Quizzes assess students for factual information, concepts and discrete skill. There is usually a single best answer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Response Journal Blog Posts</td>
<td>Students will identify sections of the novel that jump out at them as they read and respond to the novel. (Appendix E)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme Analysis Essay</td>
<td>Students will write a formal informative essay responding to the questions “Why is To Kill a Mockingbird still important to read today, 57 years after it was written? What can we still learn from this book?” (Appendix F)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Stage 3 - Learning Experiences and Instruction

**Unit at a Glance**

| Week 1  
April 9 - 13 | **Reading:** None this week  
**Activities:**  
• Where do I send your book? Assignment |
<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week</td>
<td>Reading:</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Week 2     | Chapters 1-4   | ● Reading Response Blog Post  
● The Sneetches video and response sheet [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PdLPe7XjdKc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PdLPe7XjdKc)  
● How to Identify Theme video and practice with children's book  
● Commas with Coordinate Adjectives Video and Quiz  
● Commas with Compound and Complex Sentences Video and Quiz |
| April 16   |                |                                                                            |
| - 20       |                |                                                                            |
| Week 3     | Chapters 5-9   | ● Reading Response Blog Post  
● Chapters 1-4 Discussion Forum  
● How to Annotate a text video and Chapter 9 close read [https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B1hS7-g0IoT1NkdqWDlhOWtXYkU/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B1hS7-g0IoT1NkdqWDlhOWtXYkU/view?usp=sharing)  
● Informative Writing Overview (how to introduce a topic, organize their ideas using an outline, and use precise language)  
● Commas with nonrestrictive elements video and quiz |
| April 23   |                |                                                                            |
| - 27       |                |                                                                            |
| Week 4     | Chapters 10-14 | ● Reading Response Blog Post  
● Chapters 5-9 Discussion Forum  
● “Learning to Read” by Francis Ellen Watkins Harper Questions and Discussion Forum  
● “On Turning Ten” by Billy Collins Questions and Discussion Forum  
● Use hyphens in compound adjectives video and quiz |
| April 30   |                |                                                                            |
| - May 4    |                |                                                                            |
| Week 5     | Reading: Chapters 15-20 |                                                                            |
| Week 6 | May 14 - 18 | **Reading:** Chapters 21-25  
**Activities:**  
- Reading Response Blog Post  
- Chapters 15-20 Discussion Forum  
- Chapter 23 Close Read  
- “The Scottsboro Boys” by Jessica Mc Birney Questions and Discussion Forum  
- Dashes video and quiz |
| Week 7 | May 21 - 25 | **Reading:** Chapters 25-31  
**Activities:**  
- Reading Response Blog Post  
- Chapters 21-25 Discussion Forum  
- “President Obama’s remarks on Trayvon Martin ruling” by Barack Obama Questions and Discussion Forum  
- Post Rough Draft of Essay to Blog  
- Ellipses video and quiz |
| Week 8 | May 28 - June 1 | **Reading:** None  
**Activities:**  
- Reading Response Blog Post  
- Chapters 25-31 Discussion Forum  
- “An Obstacle” by Charlotte Perkins Gilman Questions and Discussion Forum  
- Peer Review of Rough Drafts (Appendix P)  
- Finish and Submit Final Essay  
- Self Assessment of Final Draft (Appendix Q) |

**Summary**

The preceding chapter included the curriculum I developed for both the eighth grade Fusion and PASCAL programs at Cyber Village Academy. This curriculum was developed using the Understanding by Design framework and was informed by the research I have done about online learning techniques in the literature review. Both the Fusion and PASCAL curriculum include
the same desired outcomes, similar assessments, but very different methods of instruction. Because the PASCAL program is primarily online, the instruction consists of many more of the online learning techniques included in the literature review whereas the Fusion curriculum is mostly in-class instruction and includes face-to-face methods of teaching and many more in-person discussions.

There are many positive aspects to both curricula. They are both a vast improvement over the curriculum that was used my first year of teaching *To Kill a Mockingbird* but there are still areas that can be improved upon. The next chapter explores the positives and negatives of the curricula as well as its implications and limitations.
CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

Overview

Each year a new group of students come into my classroom. I know that these students have chosen to come to our unique school and are each searching for a place to fit in at CVA. During my short forty-five minutes with them each day, I hope to instill in them a love of literature and an appreciation and understanding of the English language but also a curiosity about the broader world around them. I cannot do any of these things if my curriculum is neither effective nor engaging. I am doing them a disservice if I do not actively seek out the best technologies and techniques available to utilize in my classroom. There may be aspects of the curriculum developed in this capstone that do not work for all settings, and there is plenty more research to be done, but I am excited at the prospect of growing my teaching repertoire and bringing these concepts back to my classroom.

Limitations

This unit and curriculum were created with a specific context in mind and are set up to facilitate the specific needs of the students at CVA. As we are such a unique program, I foresee it being difficult for another teacher to come in and take the Fusion curriculum and replicate it in their own classroom. The research and curriculum do, however, provide educators with an example and framework from which to build their own curriculum incorporating online learning strategies. Also, the PASCAL curriculum could easily be implemented in other fully online programs, and for multiple grade levels. As with any curriculum, the outcomes and learning experiences need to be tailored to the specific needs of the class, so the teacher would need to tweak the curriculum. Also, this is just a small piece of the curriculum that would need to be
implemented to provide students with the most effective and engaging online learning experience for a full year, rather than just a single unit. Using the Understanding by Design framework and incorporating the online learning techniques laid out in this capstone takes quite a lot of time. For me, teaching four different grade levels, it will take many years to get all the units to this level of engagement and effective learning.

In the implementation of this, or any online curriculum, teachers need to be aware that “integrating technology into the K–12 setting is inherently problematic because there are many variables with which to contend” (Smith, 2013, p. 18). Educators need to be aware of their students and their accessibility to the technology needed. Many students may not have personal devices that they can bring to class, or may need to come to the school to utilize their computers or internet access. Also, educators need to be prepared for glitches and issues that may arise and have a backup plan. With the videos I create, I upload them to YouTube as that is the most accessible platform, but I also upload them to Google to be accessed through a link in case YouTube is blocked by the school or library through which they are accessing the class.

Implications and Recommendations

While creating this curriculum, I realized that this method of curriculum design can benefit many educators all over the country. So many schools are trying to incorporate technology into their classroom and by utilizing the method of curriculum design and research that I did, they will be able to identify and utilize the most beneficial techniques available.

Technology is ever changing and so too must be the way in which we utilize technology in our classrooms. Even as I write this capstone, some of the techniques I’ve utilized are being replaced by better technologies and techniques, so continued research in this area is a must for all educators looking to implement the best technology usage in their classrooms.
The real test of any good curriculum is in its implementation. I plan on using this specific unit during quarter four of the 2017-18 school year. From there, I may need to make adjustments for the needs of the specific class as well as the time needed for different activities. After implementation, I will be able to reflect further and revise the unit itself and also my method for creating curriculum to be utilized for other classes and units.

**Final Reflections**

In the past, for the Fusion students, I have used Thursday and Friday (the online learning days) as a time for students to read the weekly assigned chapters and complete comprehension questions. In a regular five-day-a-week school, the reading happens as homework, so I was using the online learning days as homework days. I needed to shift my mindset to see that we are a five-day-a-week school, two of those days just happen to be online and away from the classroom. Using the online learning techniques I have researched has allowed me to see these online learning days as more time for instruction and engagement with my students. Even as I wrote the curriculum it was difficult to not just assign the reading on the online days, but rather to space it out throughout the unit. I had to get out of my own comfort zone in the assigning of the work and also in its creation. Seeing myself on video and hearing my own voice is quite uncomfortable for me, so I had to learn to relax and enjoy the creation of the online lectures and demonstrations.

From here, I am excited to create more units utilizing this method for online instruction. I know that it will mean a lot of hard work on my end over the summers, but the result is a curriculum that is exciting for both the students and I that also effectively teaches the language arts standards. Throughout the creation of this curriculum and the research that I have done, I have grown as an online educator. When I started teaching, I did not have a great understanding
of online learning techniques or instructional strategies in a face-to-face classroom. I had just
gotten my teaching license and was in charge of my own classroom for the first time. While I
was creating this capstone, I was also teaching full time. Throughout teaching and researching I
have gained not only knowledge in my subject area and teaching in general, but I have gained
confidence and real-life experience with the techniques I was researching. I have been able to see
first-hand the success and failure of these techniques and also the preparation necessary for
implementing them in my own classroom. There have been many successful lessons, but also a
few that have flopped due to a lack of preparation and understanding. With the knowledge and
skills I have gained through this capstone I embark on the next year of teaching confident and
feeling adequately prepared to provide an engaging and beneficial learning experience to all of
my “quirky” students.
Appendix A

6-Page Understanding by Design Template
6-Page Template, Page 1

Unit Cover Page

Unit Title: __________________________ Grade Levels: __________________________

Subject/Topic Areas: __________________________

Key Words: __________________________

Designed by: __________________________ Time Frame: __________________________

School District: __________________________ School: __________________________

Brief Summary of Unit (including curricular context and unit goals):

Unit design status: □ Completed template pages—Stages 1, 2, and 3

□ Completed blueprint for each performance task

□ Directions to students and teachers

□ Suggested accommodations

Status: □ Initial draft (date ____________) □ Revised draft (date ____________) □ Peer reviewed □ Content reviewed □ Field tested □ Validated □ Anchored

□ Completed rubrics

□ Materials and resources listed

□ Suggested extensions
Stage 1—Identify Desired Results

Established Goals:

What understandings are desired?

Students will understand that . . .

What essential questions will be considered?

What key knowledge and skills will students acquire as a result of this unit?

Students will know . . .

Students will be able to . . .
What evidence will show that students understand?

**Performance Tasks** (summary in GRASPS form):

*Complete a Performance Task Blueprint for each task (next page).

**Other Evidence** (quizzes, tests, prompts, observations, dialogues, work samples):

**Student Self-Assessment and Reflection:**
Performance Task Blueprint

What understandings and goals will be assessed through this task?

What criteria are implied in the standards and understandings regardless of the task specifics? What qualities must student work demonstrate to signify that standards were met?

Through what authentic performance task will students demonstrate understanding?

What student products and performances will provide evidence of desired understandings?

By what criteria will student products and performances be evaluated?
### Stage 3—Plan Learning Experiences and Instruction

Consider the WHERE TO elements.
### Stage 3: Plan Learning Experiences and Instruction

Consider the WHERE TO elements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
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Appendix B

Performance Task Ideas Based on the Six Facets of Understanding
# Performance Task Ideas Based on the Six Facets of Understanding

## Samples by Subject

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Explain</th>
<th>Interpret</th>
<th>Apply</th>
<th>Perspective</th>
<th>Empathy</th>
<th>Self Knowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies:</td>
<td>Write letters home depicting what pioneer life is really like vs. what you expected.</td>
<td>Read and interpret primary sources such as journals and stories of pioneers to infer from vocabulary and images what life was really like.</td>
<td>Create a timeline exhibit in which photos and text with facts tell the story of the hardships of pioneer life.</td>
<td>Stage a debate between settlers and Native Americans on the effects of western settlement.</td>
<td>Write a letter to relatives &quot;back east&quot; describing the death of pioneer neighbors.</td>
<td>Why Leave Home?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pioneer Life</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friendship</td>
<td>&quot;Who are your true friends? Who are your fair-weather friends?&quot;</td>
<td>Interpret &quot;Spray&quot; in Pig and the Pig as Friends. What does episode reveal about friendship?</td>
<td>Place an order for a &quot;true friend&quot; from an imaginary mail-order friendship store.</td>
<td>How do others view me as a friend?</td>
<td>Write an essay or journal entry to describe what some kids always get picked on and what it feels like to be those kids.</td>
<td>Respond to writing prompt: Who are my true friends?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History:</td>
<td>Write a newspaper editorial for a 1777 newspaper: What was the battle with England inevitable?</td>
<td>&quot;What really happened at Lexington?&quot; Analyze the term and information available to make sense of the event (facts vs. opinions).</td>
<td>Read Canadian and French accounts of the Revolutionary War era. Compare and contrast their use in teaching resources at a simulated school board meeting.</td>
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<tr>
<td>U.S. Revolutionary War</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics: Conic Sections</td>
<td>Explain how solving a conic problem at conic section and justify their algebraic formulae.</td>
<td>Analyze various data sets to determine the &quot;best-fit&quot; conic section curve.</td>
<td>Design a &quot;whisper chamber&quot; for a science experiment using various logical assumptions, using your knowledge of conic sections.</td>
<td>Conduct experiments with different conic sections, measuring the angles of various conic sections</td>
<td>Create an imaginary diary entry &quot;A day in the life of an intern.&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physics: Electricity</td>
<td>Develop a troubleshooting guide for an electric circuit system.</td>
<td>Assume the role of an electrical subcontractor: Interpret and analyze wiring diagrams for building a home.</td>
<td>Build a working set of circuits for a model railroad layout.</td>
<td>AC or DC? Argue the merits of each type of current for various uses.</td>
<td>Create an imaginary diary entry &quot;A day in the life of an intern.&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>Explain the difference between the various forces of past tense and when they should be and should not be used.</td>
<td>Compare French vs. English versions of Le Petit Prince to determine if and how language influences the meaning.</td>
<td>Role-play a conversation over the phone (e.g., planning weekend activities for French visitors to your town),</td>
<td>Develop a guide containing lists of common expressions and their translations to help French visitors avoid misunderstandings.</td>
<td>Keep a log of your reactions to French customs.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Performance Task Ideas Based on the Six Facets of Understanding (continued)
Samples by Subject

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Explain</th>
<th>Interpret</th>
<th>Apply</th>
<th>Perspective</th>
<th>Empathy</th>
<th>Self-Knowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>History and Social Studies</td>
<td>Provide conceptualization (e.g., compare and contrast literature)</td>
<td>Develop an oral history</td>
<td>Design a museum exhibit for the story of a significant historical figure</td>
<td>Compare your research findings with a primary source, such as a letter or newspaper article</td>
<td>Role-play a meeting of the minds (e.g., Emerson deciding to drop the literary bomb)</td>
<td>Self-assessment of your involvement in class discussions and performances, and explain your reasons for participation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>Study a common phenomenon (e.g., weather data)</td>
<td>Develop a new model for predicting activity levels in the data</td>
<td>Develop and test a new model for predicting activity levels in the data</td>
<td>Examine the differences between various models (e.g., Gaussian, Poisson) for estimating attendance at a baseball game</td>
<td>Role-play a meeting of the minds (e.g., Darwin deciding to drop the end of the world bomb)</td>
<td>Develop a mathematical model for predicting attendance at a baseball game, and produce a written report on the model and its limitations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English and Language Arts</td>
<td>Describe why a particular rhetorical technique is effective in a speech</td>
<td>&quot;What's wrong with Holden?&quot; Analyze the main character in To Kill a Mockingbird</td>
<td>Write and present a speech analyzing the main character in To Kill a Mockingbird</td>
<td>Read and discuss The Real Story of the Three Little Pigs by A. Wolf</td>
<td>Work in a group kitchen and write an essay on the experiences of the home-cook after reading Thomas Cook</td>
<td>Attach a self-assessment to each paper you write reflecting on your writing process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>Explain the role of silence in music</td>
<td>Represent fun and humor in visual art or dance</td>
<td>Write and perform a monologue on the role of silence in music</td>
<td>Critique three different versions of the same Shakespearean play (focus on a key scene)</td>
<td>Imagine you are a politician from Roman and Juliet, and consider your role in the final act</td>
<td>Keep a log of the drama class exercises that demand the most from you emotionally.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>Link everyday actions and facts to the laws of physics, focusing on usually misunderstood aspects (e.g., mass compared to weight)</td>
<td>Take readings of pond water to determine whether the algae problem is serious</td>
<td>Perform a chemical analysis of local stream water to determine local pollution, and present findings</td>
<td>Conduct thought experiments (e.g., Elantern---What would the temperature be like if we were traveling in a beam of light?)</td>
<td>Read and discuss pre-modern or pre-disciplinary scientific writings to identify plausible or &quot;top- level&quot; theories (given the information available at the time)</td>
<td>Propose solutions to an interesting cooperative learning activity based on what didn't work in your group.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C

Constructing a Performance Task Scenario Using GRASPS
Constructing a Performance Task Scenario Using GRASPS

Consider the following set of stem statements as you construct a scenario for a performance task. Refer to the previous idea sheets to help you brainstorm possible scenarios. (Note: These are idea starters. Resist the urge to fill in all of the blanks.)

Goal:
- Your task is
- The goal is to
- The problem or challenge is
- The obstacles to overcome are

Role:
- You are
- You have been asked to
- Your job is

Audience:
- Your clients are
- The target audience is
- You need to convince

Situation:
- The context you find yourself in is
- The challenge involves dealing with

Product, Performance, and Purpose:
- You will create a
  in order to
- You need to develop
  so that

Standards and Criteria for Success:
- Your performance needs to
- Your work will be judged by
- Your product must meet the following standards:
  - A successful result will
Appendix D

Grammar Game Board
Appendix E

Reading Response Blog Journal Posts and Rubric
Reading Response Blog Posts

As you read the novel, keep track of lines, sentences, paragraphs, or sections that jump out at you. Write yourself a brief note so you can remember what you were thinking. (If nothing jumps out at you by the time you have finished reading the assigned chapters, go back and find something to respond to.)

When you have finished reading the assigned chapters, you will type up a reading response in your class blog. Your reading response must be about the assigned reading. If you are struggling with what to say, try one of the options below:

1. **Give an Opinion**: Tell what you think or feel about a certain part, and why. Be specific.
2. **Ask a Question**: This can be a basic question about something you don’t understand in the text, or a larger question that the text made you consider.
3. **Make a Connection**: As you read, a certain point in the text may remind you of another story, poem, movie, song, or something from real life. How are the two alike?
4. **Significant Passage**: You realize a certain passage in the text is important. Why do you think it’s important? What does it mean? What does it tell you about the entire book or story?
5. **Language Recognition**: You notice some sensory details or figurative language such as a simile, onomatopoeia, or personification, and so on. What is the language and how does it affect the piece?
6. **Find Foreshadowing**: You read something that seems like a hint of what will come later. Explain why you think this and make a prediction.
7. **Theme Recognition**: You find a sentence or two that might be the theme (the “So what?”) of the piece. Explain it in your own words.
8. **Spot the setting**: You notice a part that refers to the place or time of the story. Why is it important?
9. **Character Description**: You notice a detail about a character (what he or she looks like, thinks, says, or does). Why is it important? What does it reveal about the character?
10. **Mark the motivation**: You realize a character’s motive(s) (what a character wants). Explain the motive(s) and its effect on the story or other characters.
11. **Detect the Conflict**: You realize one of the conflicts or problems in the story. Explain it, and explain how you recognized it.
12. **Find the Climax**: You read a part that you realize is the biggest event (or most important moment) in the story. Explain why it is so important.
13. **Interesting Intro:** You think the author’s introduction is interesting, clever, or engaging. Tell what technique the author used and why you think it is effective.

14. **Clever Conclusion:** You think the author’s conclusion or clincher is really effective. Tell what technique the author used and why it works.

*Your post should be at least a paragraph, but can be more.*  
*Be sure to include multimedia such as photos, videos, audio, links, etc.*
# Reading Response Blog Post Rubric

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ideas and Content</strong></td>
<td>The ideas expressed are not original, often confused, and are not connected to the subject matter.</td>
<td>The ideas expressed are not necessarily original, and/or are not connected to the subject matter.</td>
<td>The student expresses some original ideas. The majority of ideas are related to the subject matter.</td>
<td>The student has many original ideas and the great majority are related to the subject matter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Writing Quality</strong></td>
<td>Posts are of poor quality. Writing is confusing and difficult to read due to errors in writing quality.</td>
<td>Posts show below average quality, can be confusing at times, and makes some errors that interfere with understanding.</td>
<td>Posts show average writing style. Few errors or errors that do not interfere with understanding are made.</td>
<td>Posts show above average writing style. There is no confusion and very few errors are made.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community</strong></td>
<td>Student does not participate in the blogging community.</td>
<td>Student rarely participates in the blogging community.</td>
<td>Student participated moderately in the blogging community.</td>
<td>Student actively participated in the blogging community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Use of Enhancements</strong></td>
<td>The student did nothing to enhance or personalize the blog post.</td>
<td>There is very little evidence of multimedia enhancement and the post is primarily text based.</td>
<td>The student enhanced their post to some extent using multimedia. Multimedia does not enhance understanding of what was written.</td>
<td>The student greatly enhanced their post using multimedia that helped the reader to further understand what was written.</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Appendix F

Theme Analysis Essay Requirements and Rubric
Theme Analysis Essay Requirements

Essential Question: Why is To Kill a Mockingbird still important to read today, 57 years after it was written? What can we still learn from this book?

The theme of a work of literature is the comment the author makes about his subject matter, a revelation about the behavior of human beings or the conduct of society; an insight into the human condition. It is the insight we gain from thinking about what we have read. The theme of a literary work is its underlying central idea, or the generalization it communicates about life. At times, the author's theme may not confirm or agree with your own beliefs, but even then, if it is skillfully written, the work will still have a theme that illuminates some aspects of true human experience. Themes have the amazing ability to span time and place. Through this essay you will show how a theme from Harper Lee’s To Kill a Mockingbird is still relevant today. This may require you to do a bit of research to help support your theme.

Step 1: Identify a theme in To Kill a Mockingbird that resonates with you. Something you are actually interested in.
Step 2: Do some research. Find newspaper articles, magazine articles, websites, blogs, videos, podcasts, radio, etc. that show how this theme is still relevant today. This will be some of the evidence used in your paper.
Step 3: Gather evidence from the novel that proves this theme actually is in the novel.
Step 4: Write your essay

Once you have selected a theme write it out in a VERY clear sentence like this:
“The author wants us to learn that we should be thankful for what we have and not dwell on the things we don’t have.”
This is called your Topic Sentence or Thesis Statement. In a theme essay, it’s also called the theme or author’s message.

After deciding on a thesis, you need to form a rough outline using the provided example. You will need to provide at least two examples from the book to illustrate the theme (but you can always provide more than 2), which will be the components of your body paragraphs. You will also need to provide 2 examples (with quotation evidence) of how this theme is still relevant today.

Be sure to correctly cite your quotes and sources.
You may need quotes to support your analysis. Don’t rely on the quotes to explain themselves. You need to lead into the quote, and also comment on the quote after you quote it. You need to effectively show how the quote helps to prove your point.
Follow the outline below---But remember, this is not a 5 paragraph essay, you choose where the paragraph breaks are and when you want the body to end.

- **Introduction**-
  - Hook
  - Title
  - Author
  - Short summary of the novel
  - Theme (Thesis Statement)

- **Body**-Write these paragraphs to explain how the author expresses the theme in his book and how that theme is relevant today. To describe each example, you need to include the following information.
  o What happened? What did the character do, say, or think to show the theme?
  o How does this scenario prove the theme?
  o What has happened in current society that relates to this theme? What was the incident?
  o How does this prove the theme?

- **Conclusion**
  o Restate your theme
  o What did you think of the theme? How has it affected you?
  o Give the paper a true sense of closure

After you complete your final essay, you need to CAREFULLY proofread it, or have someone else proofread it. I want these to be typed, double-spaced, with your name, and a title. Once completed, share with me via Google Drive, on Moodle, by email, or turn it into me in hard copy. If you have any questions, please ask me.

This Essay is due: ________________
Theme Analysis Essay Rubric

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th><strong>Exceeds Expectations</strong></th>
<th><strong>Meets Expectations</strong></th>
<th><strong>Approaches Expectations</strong></th>
<th><strong>Needs Work</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Introduction</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Topic is introduced clearly</td>
<td></td>
<td>Introduction does not introduce the topic</td>
<td>Introduction is not present</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Introduction provides a clear preview of what is to follow in the rest of the essay</td>
<td>Topic is somewhat introduced or is unclear</td>
<td>Introductions somewhat previews or has an unclear preview of what is to follow in the essay</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Evidence</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Topic is developed with relevant, well chosen examples and evidence</td>
<td>Evidence may not be well chosen or relevant to the topic</td>
<td>Evidence is present but is confusing and not relevant to the topic</td>
<td>Evidence and examples are missing in the essay</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Quotations</strong></td>
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<td>Quotations from both the text and examples are utilized throughout the essay and cited correctly</td>
<td>Quotations are used but may not be cited correctly</td>
<td>Quotations are not present throughout the essay and/or are not cited</td>
<td>Quotations are not present in the essay</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Transitions</strong></td>
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<td>Varied transitions are used appropriately to create cohesion throughout the essay</td>
<td>Transitions are used but seem repetitive or do not help to create a cohesive essay</td>
<td>Transitions are not used throughout the essay so creates a sense of a disjointed essay</td>
<td>Transitions are not used at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Precise Language</strong></td>
<td>Uses precise language to help explain the topic</td>
<td>Precise language is used in some areas of the essay</td>
<td>Precise language is used sparingly throughout the essay</td>
<td>Language is too broad and vague to explain the topic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Any domain specific vocabulary is explained/defined within the essay</td>
<td>Most vocabulary is explained/defined</td>
<td>Vocabulary is explained/defined in some places but not others</td>
<td>Vocabulary is not explained/defined in the essay</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Style</strong></th>
<th>Essay utilizes and maintains a formal style</th>
<th>Essay mostly has a formal style</th>
<th>Essay has a somewhat formal style</th>
<th>Essay has a very informal style</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does not use “I” or “me” pronouns in the essay</td>
<td>“I” or “me” is used once or twice in the essay</td>
<td>“I” or “me” is used in many places throughout the essay</td>
<td>“I” and “me” are used throughout the essay</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Conclusion</strong></th>
<th>The conclusion supports the information presented in the essay without presenting anything new</th>
<th>The conclusion supports the information presented but includes some new information</th>
<th>The conclusion strays from the topic of the essay and/or presents quite a bit new information</th>
<th>The conclusion is not present in the essay</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The conclusion provides a complete sense of closure to the essay</td>
<td>The conclusion provides some sense of closure to the essay</td>
<td>There is no sense of closure in the conclusion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Conventions</strong></th>
<th>All errors have been located and eliminated.</th>
<th>Almost all errors have been located and eliminated; remaining ones don’t interfere with meaning.</th>
<th>Proofreading/editing still needs work; at times errors interfere with meaning.</th>
<th>Targeted errors are so frequent that they interfere with meaning.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proofreading/editing still needs work; at times errors interfere with meaning.</td>
<td>Insufficient writing to determine competence.</td>
<td>Insufficient writing to determine competence.</td>
<td>Insufficient writing to determine competence.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix G

Setting Videos Response Sheet
Setting Videos Response Sheet

**Background Knowledge** Before the videos, write anything you already know about each topic

1. Harper Lee ______________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

2. The Great Depression ____________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

3. Jim Crow Laws _________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

**During the Videos** Record key points, details, and new information you learned from each video

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

**After Viewing** List any questions you still have (must write at least 1 question)

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
Appendix H

Fishbowl Discussion Guidelines
Fishbowl Discussion Guidelines

1. 5 seats are placed in a circle in the center of the room
2. All other seats are moved to the sides of the room
3. The 5 students in the center of the circle are the only ones allowed to speak in the room. There are no side conversations outside of the circle. The teacher randomly chooses the first students in the circle.
4. The students engage in discussion on a topic or questions presented by the teacher.
5. All students must use common courtesy. No yelling, no interrupting, no name calling, etc.
6. Once a student in the circle has spoken, a student from outside the circle may come and tap that student. The student in the circle must give up their seat to the student who tapped them and return to the outside observation circle.
7. Students can return to the circle at any time but cannot tap someone until they have spoken in the circle.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>States and uses foundational knowledge</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accurately expresses completely relevant foundational knowledge pertaining to the issues raised during the discussion</td>
<td>Accurately expresses mostly relevant foundational knowledge pertaining to issues raised during the discussion</td>
<td>Accurately expresses somewhat relevant foundational knowledge pertaining to an issue raised by someone else</td>
<td>Does not express any relevant foundational knowledge</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elaborates statements with explanation, reason or evidence</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discusses an issue with more than one elaborated statement</td>
<td>Discusses an issue with one elaborated statement</td>
<td>Elaborates a statement raised by someone else with an explanation, reason, or evidence</td>
<td>Does not elaborate any issues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Invites contributions from, and acknowledges</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>0</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engages others in the discussion by inviting their contributions</td>
<td>Invites comments from others but does not acknowledge</td>
<td>Does not invite comments from others, but allows others to</td>
<td>Does not invite comments from others nor acknowledge</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>statements of, others</td>
<td>and acknowledging their contributions</td>
<td>their statements speak. Does not acknowledge contributions from others.</td>
<td>their contributions.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Challenges the accuracy, logic, relevance, or clarity of statements</strong></td>
<td>Constructively challenges the accuracy, clarity, relevance, or logic of statements made</td>
<td>Responds in a civil manner to a statement made by someone else by challenging its accuracy, clarity, relevance, or logic.</td>
<td>Responds in a civil manner but does not challenge the accuracy, clarity, relevance, or logic of statements.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Does not respond in a civil manner in all conversations. Does not challenge the accuracy, clarity, relevance, or logic of statements.</td>
<td></td>
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Appendix I

One Questions Quizzers
One Question Quizzers

Chapter 5: At the end of the chapter, what future career do we discover Jem had been considering?

Chapter 6: What lie does Dill tell the adults to explain Jem’s missing pants?

Chapter 10: When he was a boy, what was Atticus’ nickname?

Chapter 11: What color are Miss Dubose’s beloved camellia flowers?

Chapter 15: After supper, what is Atticus carrying that catches the attention of Jem and Scout?

Chapter 16: Judge Taylor doesn’t smoke. Instead, what unusual habit does he enjoy?

Chapter 21: Why does Atticus allow Jem and Scout (and Dill) to return to court after dinner?

Chapter 22: Tom Robinson’s supporters leave piles of food for Atticus and his family. Where does Calpurnia find all of the food?

Chapter 26: Why is Jem so late coming home from school these days?

Chapter 27: Describe the trick that Maycomb’s kids played on Miss Tutti and Miss Frutti.
Appendix J
The Sneetches Response Sheet
The Sneetches by Dr. Seuss

Before Viewing
How would you define the following words? Create a definition using your own words.

- Discrimination
- Stereotyping
- Prejudice

After Viewing
1. What scenes caught your attention? Why?

2. What do the stars symbolize?

3. What factors determine whether you have “stars” in the real world?

4. Who has and who doesn’t have stars in the real world? Think about the world and our school. Who is bullied or looked down upon?

5. What are some life lessons that can be learned from watching The Sneetches?

6. Peace and harmony are only reached after none of the Sneetches remember who is who. Some think this message could be interpreted to suggest that people
should disregard their cultural history, and that this is the only way to achieve peaceful coexistence. Do you believe this to be true? Will tolerance be reached only when no one knows the difference between races, ethnicities, genders, religions, etc?
Appendix K

“Learning to Read” Poem and Questions
Learning to Read
By Francis Ellen Watkins Harper
1872

Frances Ellen Watkins Harper (1825-1911) was the child of free African-American parents. She attended the Academy for Negro Youth until she was 13 years old. In her adult life, Harper helped slaves escape through the Underground Railroad (a network of routes and safe houses used by slaves in the 19th century) and wrote for anti-slavery newspapers. As you read "Learning to Read," consider what it would have been like to be an African-American child growing up in 1872.

[1] Very soon the Yankee teachers
   Came down and set up school;
   But, oh! how the Rebs did hate it,—
   It was agin' their rule.

[5] Our masters always tried to hide
   Book learning from our eyes;
   Knowledge didn't agree with slavery—
   'Twould make us all too wise.

But some of us would try to steal
   A little from the book,
   And put the words together,
   And learn by hook or crook.

I remember Uncle Caldwell,
   Who took pot-liquor fat
[10] And greased the pages of his book,
   And hid it in his hat.

And had his master ever seen
   The leaves up on his head,
   He'd have thought them greasy papers,
   But nothing to be read.

And there was Mr. Turner's Ben,
   Who heard the children spell,
   And picked the words right up by heart,
   And learned to read 'em well.

---

1. "Yankees" are people from the northern Union states. During the Civil War, Union states fought against Confederate states.
2. "Rebs" is short for "rebels." The term refers to Confederate sympathizers, who, during the Civil War, fought to maintain Southern society (including slavery).
Well, the Northern folks kept sending
The Yankee teachers down;
And they stood right up and helped us,
Though Rebs did sneer and frown.

And, I longed to read my Bible,
For precious words it said;
But when I begun to learn it,
Folks just shook their heads,

And said there is no use trying,
Oh! Chloe, you're too late;

But as I was rising sixty,
I had no time to wait.

So I got a pair of glasses,
And straight to work I went,
And never stopped till I could read

The hymns and Testament.

Then I got a little cabin—
A place to call my own—
And I felt as independent
As the queen upon her throne.

Learning to Read by Francis Ellen Watkins Harper is in the public domain.

3. The Christian Bible is divided into two sections, the New and Old Testament.
Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. Which of the following best summarizes the action of this poem? [RL.2]
   A. A slave girl reflects on her childhood when she was denied the right to an education. She describes the great risks that she and other slaves took in order to learn.
   B. A speaker, who was once a slave, describes how she managed to escape so that she could attend school in the North.
   C. The narrator, a slave holder, describes her childhood growing up on a plantation in the South.
   D. The speaker, a former slave, describes the extreme brutality she experienced under the hand of Mr. Turner, the slave master.

2. PART A: Which of the following best describes the author's most likely purpose for writing this poem? [RL.2]
   A. To warn other slaves about certain dangerous escape routes
   B. To teach other slaves how to avoid getting caught with papers and books
   C. To spread awareness about the injustices of slavery and the benefits of education
   D. To incite a rebellion against Mr. Turner and other slave holders

3. PART B: Choose a quote from the passage that best supports your answer to Part A. [RL.1]
   A. "And put the words together, and learn by hook or crook."
   B. "He'd have thought them greasy papers, but nothing to be read."
   C. "Then I got a little cabin, a place to call my own."
   D. "Knowledge didn't agree with slavery – 'Twould make us all too wise."

4. In line 9, what is the effect of the word "steal" on the overall message of the poem? Why did the poet choose to use this word? Explain your answer. [RL.4]
5. Who is Mr. Turner's Ben, and how did he learn how to read? Support your answer with evidence from the text. [RL.3]

6. PART A: Which of the following best describes the speaker's feeling about eventually learning how to read? [RL.6]
   A. The speaker feels scared that the slave masters will find out and hurt her.
   B. The speaker feels powerful because she can access knowledge on her own.
   C. The speaker feels unsure about how education will affect her future.
   D. The speaker feels resentful toward the Yankees that set up schools.

7. PART B: Which of the following quotes from the poem best supports your answer to Part A? [RL.1]
   A. “Our masters always tried to hide / Book learning from our eyes” (line 5-6)
   B. “They stood right up and helped us / Though the Rebs did sneer and frown.” (line 25-27)
   C. “But when I began to learn it/ Folks just shook their head.” (line 31-32)
   D. “The queen upon her throne.” (line 44)

8. PART A: Which of the following best describes the poem's rhyme scheme? [RL.5]
   A. The poem is written in free verse. It does not follow a pattern.
   B. The poem follows a pattern in the first half, then breaks the pattern in the second half.
   C. The poem has an ABCB rhyme scheme. This pattern exists through the whole poem.
   D. The poem has an ABAC ACBA rhyme scheme.

9. PART B: Which of the following best describes the effect of the rhythm and rhyme on the poem's overall meaning? [RL.5]
   A. The rhythm and rhyme give the poem a sing-songy tone, which matches the poem's not-so-serious message.
   B. The rhythm and rhyme scheme contribute to the poem's serious, scary tone, which emphasizes the fear that the slaves felt when they were trying to hide books from their slave masters.
   C. The rhythm and rhyme scheme is upbeat and contributes to the poem's positive message about self-empowerment, ingenuity, and independence.
   D. Both B and C
Appendix L

“On Turning Ten” Poem and Questions
On Turning Ten
By Billy Collins
From The Art Of Drowning • 1995

Billy Collins (b. 1941) is an award-winning American poet who writes about everyday occurrences to express the deeper meaning of life. In this poem, the speaker reflects on his youth. As you read “On Turning Ten,” take notes on the speaker’s tone and how that reflects Collins’ message about being young and growing old.

[1] The whole idea of it makes me feel like I’m coming down with something, something worse than any stomach ache or the headaches I get from reading in bad light—a kind of measles of the spirit, a mumps of the psyche, a disfiguring chicken pox of the soul.

You tell me it is too early to be looking back, but that is because you have forgotten

[10] the perfect simplicity of being one and the beautiful complexity introduced by two. But I can lie on my bed and remember every digit At four I was an Arabian wizard. I could make myself invisible

[15] by drinking a glass of milk a certain way. At seven I was a soldier, at nine a prince.

But now I am mostly at the window watching the late afternoon light. Back then it never fell so solemnly

[20] against the side of my tree house, and my bicycle never leaned against the garage as it does today, all the dark blue speed drained out of it.

This is the beginning of sadness, I say to myself, as I walk through the universe in my sneakers. It is time to say good-bye to my imaginary friends, time to turn the first big number.

[25] It seems only yesterday I used to believe there was nothing under my skin but light.

If you cut me I could shine. But now when I fall upon the sidewalks of life, I skin my knees. I bleed.
Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which of the following best summarizes a theme of the poem? [RL.2]
   A. Imagination is constrained by age.
   B. Growing old is a universal fear, even though it feels unique to the individual.
   C. Growing up means letting go of the carefree innocence of childhood.
   D. Nature reflects the human cycle of life.

2. PART B: Which of the following phrases best supports the answer to Part A? [RL.1]
   A. “The whole idea of it makes me feel / like I'm coming down with something.” (Lines 1-2)
   B. “But now I am mostly at the window / watching the late afternoon light.” (Lines 17-18)
   C. “Back then it never fell so solemnly / against the side of my tree house, / and my bicycle never leaned against the garage / as it does today, / all the dark blue speed drained out of it.” (Lines 19-23)
   D. “This is the beginning of sadness, I say to myself, / ... It is time to say good-bye to my imaginary friends, / time to turn the first big number.” (Lines 24-27)

3. Reread lines 5-7: “a kind of measles of the spirit, / a mumps of the psyche, / a disfiguring chicken pox of the soul.” What does this description reveal about the speaker's attitude towards aging? [RL.6]
   A. The speaker feels physically nauseated by age and older people.
   B. The speaker compares his feelings about growing up to sickness, suggesting that he does not have a positive outlook on it.
   C. The speaker likens aging to sickness, believing it to be a physically arduous process.
   D. The speaker fears aging because he associates it with sickness and dying.

4. PART A: Which of the following best describes the tone of stanza 3? [RL.4]
   A. Sullen
   B. Disgruntled
   C. Whimsical
   D. Sarcastic
5. PART B: What diction, imagery, or figurative language develops this tone? [RL.1]

6. Consider the final stanza of the poem. How does the conclusion contribute to the theme of the poem? [RL.5]
Appendix M

“The Scottsboro Boys” Article and Questions
The Scottsboro Boys
By Jessica McBlirney
2017

The trial of the Scottsboro Boys was a historic event in which nine black youths were wrongfully accused and convicted for a crime they didn’t commit. Occurring in 1931, the Scottsboro Boys’ trials sparked outrage and a demand for social change. As you read, take note of the variety of ways in which the criminal justice system failed the Scottsboro Boys.

[1] There are few legal cases in U.S. history that have received as much media attention as the trials of the nine Scottsboro Boys in 1931. The trials of the African American teenagers went on for decades and began to carve out a path for racial equality in the U.S. justice system.

False Accusations

On the morning of March 25, 1931, nine young black men rode illegally in the back of a freight train chugging across Alabama. Charlie Weems, Ozie Powell, Clarence Norris, Olen Montgomery, Willie Roberson, Haywood Patterson, Eugene Williams, and brothers Andrew and Leroy Wright were all unemployed, travelling to a new destination to look for work. The oldest was 19, and the youngest only 13.

During the journey, a fight broke out between the nine young men and some white men who had also jumped onto the freight car. The train had to stop in Scottsboro, Alabama to end the fight, and the white men went to the local authorities to accuse the black youths of assault. As it turned out, two white women had also been hiding in the train car. They falsely claimed the nine black teenagers had raped them.

The accusation was inflammatory in the Jim-Crow South. News of the alleged crime spread rapidly across the county; later that same day, the Jackson County Sentinel condemned the “revolting crime.” Whites in Scottsboro were so upset that a mob gathered outside the jail where the boys were held, and the Alabama Army National Guard had to step in to control the crowd.

1. Throughout the first half of the 20th century, southern states enforced “Jim-Crow” laws, or laws that promoted racial segregation.
2. Condemn (verb): to express complete disapproval of, typically in public
The trial was held in Scottsboro just two weeks after the arrests, and an all-white jury quickly recommended the death penalty for eight of the nine boys, all except 13-year-old Leroy Wright. The judge scheduled the executions for mid-July, the earliest the law would allow.

**Anger and Appeals**

News of the ruling and severe sentences travelled around the country, and after a demonstration in New York, the Communist Party USA decided to get involved to try to stop the executions. Their legal division convinced the boys' parents to request new trials and launched detailed investigations into the rape accusations. The stir was enough to delay the boys' execution date until the case could be appealed to the Alabama Supreme Court.

Meanwhile, the Communist Party USA brought continuous media attention to the details of the case. They hoped to use the baseless accusations and the extreme punishments to shine a light on blatantly unjust legal practices in the South. The Scottsboro Boys became symbols of racial inequality and the need for change.

The Alabama Supreme Court upheld the original convictions, but the boys and their legal counsel brought the case to an even higher court, the U.S. Supreme Court. In the landmark case, Powell v. Alabama, the justices determined that the boys had not received access to competent legal counsel — thus, their Fourteenth Amendment rights had been violated, and they would have the right to start new trials.

**Faint Signs of Hope**

Even though they had new hope for freedom now, the retrial process was slow and contentious, despite overwhelming evidence of the boys' innocence. One of the strongest pieces of evidence came from an accuser herself. In early 1932, a letter surfaced from one of the accusers, Ruby Bates. In it, she admitted that her rape claim was a sham: "[I]t is a lie about those negroes jassing me.... Those negroes did not touch me or those white boys." She blamed the Scottsboro police for coercing her into the original accusation. She further admitted, "I know it was wrong to let those Negroes die on account of me."

Still, the retrial process dragged on. In 1933, one of the boys, Haywood Patterson, stood retrial in the courtroom of one Judge James Horton. His defense attorney called numerous witnesses and built a strong argument that the two girls on the train had lied. Their story did not match medical evidence or the stories of other witnesses, and he even got Ruby Bates to testify that the whole story had been made up. The defense seemed inarguable. And yet, after only a few minutes of deliberation, the jury pronounced Patterson guilty and recommended execution.

Judge James Horton knew he had to step in. In an unprecedented move, he reversed the jury's decision and mandated that the trial restart yet again. His courage cost him his judgeship in the next election.

---

3. The amendment refers to one's right to equal protection of the laws.
4. Contentious (adjective): causing or likely to cause an argument
5. most likely referring to some kind of sexual behavior
6. Coerce (verb): to persuade an unwilling person to do something by using force or threats
7. Unprecedented (adjective): never done or known before
Patterson was not the only one of the Scottsboro Boys to experience stubborn juries in the face of convincing evidence. When another all-white jury convicted Clarence Norris in his retrial, he appealed to the Supreme Court. The 1935 Norris v. Alabama case determined that it was unconstitutional to exclude African Americans from serving on juries for African American defendants. Alabama's jury selection process was inherently racially skewed and violated Norris' fourteenth amendment right.

Digging Up the Past

The legal proceedings continued for several years. A few of the young men managed to get acquitted. By 1938, five of the Scottsboro Boys remained in Alabama prisons. Their sentences had been reduced from the death penalty to decades in jail, a small but significant victory. Over the next 12 years, the remaining five also made it out of the prison system, usually by receiving parole. Haywood Patterson, however, accomplished an impressive escape in 1948.

Years later, in 2013, the Alabama Board of Pardons and Paroles granted posthumous pardons to three of the Scottsboro Boys who never had their convictions overturned: Charlie Weems, Andrew Wright, and Haywood Patterson.

The Scottsboro incident was one of the earliest signs of the need for racial justice in the U.S. It garnered media attention for several years, and racial equality groups such as the Communist Party USA and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) capitalized on the cases to win support for their cause.

If the Scottsboro Boys' story sounds familiar, it might be because the saga partially inspired two famous novels: Richard Wright's *Native Son* and Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Lee's novel in particular has some key similarities: in it, a black man is accused of raping a white woman, and the book's protagonist is six years old, about the same age as Lee during the first Scottsboro trials. One reason the Scottsboro Boys appear repeatedly in literature and pop culture is because their story clearly demonstrates the importance of racial equality and freedom.

*The Scottsboro Boys* by Jessica McElroy, Copyright © 2017 by CommonLit, Inc. This text is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0.

8. **Skew** (verb): to make biased or distorted in a way that is regarded as unfair
9. **Acquit** (verb): to free someone from a criminal charge by a verdict of not guilty
10. *Parole* (noun): the release of a prisoner before the completion of their prison sentence, on the promise of good behavior.
11. **Posthumous** (adjective): occurring after the death of the person
12. **Garner** (verb): to gather or collect something, especially information or approval
Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which statement best identifies the central idea of the text? [RI.2]
   A. The Scottsboro Boys' trials showed the enormous degree of racial inequality that existed in the United States' criminal justice system.
   B. The Scottsboro Boys' trials were an unfortunate mistake made in U.S. history that have since been apologized for.
   C. The Scottsboro Boys' trials proved that a new system of screening witnesses was necessary.
   D. The Scottsboro Boys' trials showed how disorganized the criminal justice system was at the time and how far it has come since then.

2. PART B: Which quote from the text best supports the answer to Part A? [RI.1]
   A. "In early 1932, a letter surfaced from one of the accusers, Ruby Bates. In it, she admitted that her rape claim was a sham..." (Paragraph 9)
   B. "Alabama's jury selection process was inherently racially skewed and violated Norris' fourteenth amendment right." (Paragraph 12)
   C. "The legal proceedings continued for several years. A few of the young men managed to get acquitted." (Paragraph 13)
   D. "...in 2013, the Alabama Board of Pardons and Paroles granted posthumous pardons to three of the Scottsboro Boys who never had their convictions overturned..." (Paragraph 14)

3. PART A: What is the meaning of the word “inflammatory” used in paragraph 4? [RI.4]
   A. inspiring disbelief
   B. causing anger
   C. spreading quickly
   D. encouraging reckless behavior

4. PART B: Which detail from the text best supports the answer to Part A? [RI.1]
   A. "They falsely claimed the nine black teenagers had raped them." (Paragraph 3)
   B. "News of the alleged crime spread rapidly across the county..." (Paragraph 4)
   C. "...a mob gathered outside the jail where the boys were held..." (Paragraph 4)
   D. "The judge scheduled the executions for mid-July, the earliest the law would allow." (Paragraph 5)
5. "The trial was held in Scottsboro just two weeks after the arrests, and an all-white jury [RI.5] quickly recommended the death penalty for eight of the nine boys, all except 13-year-old Leroy Wright" (Paragraph 5). How does the quoted sentence contribute to the development of ideas in the text?
Appendix N
“President Obama’s Remarks on Trayvon Martin Ruling” Speech and Questions
President Obama's Remarks on Trayvon Martin Ruling
By President Barack Obama
2013

On the evening of February 26, 2012, Trayvon Martin, a 17-year old African American boy from Florida, was fatally shot by George Zimmerman, a neighborhood watch volunteer. Zimmerman was charged with second-degree murder but was found “not guilty” in July of 2013. The following text contains the formal remarks of President Barack Obama after the trial. As you read, take notes on how President Obama addresses the various reactions to the ruling in his speech.

1. I wanted to come out here, first of all, to tell you that Jay¹ is prepared for all your questions and is very much looking forward to the session. The second thing is I want to let you know that over the next couple of weeks, there’s going to obviously be a whole range of issues — immigration, economics, et cetera — we’ll try to arrange a fuller press conference to address your questions.

   The reason I actually wanted to come out today is not to take questions, but to speak to an issue that obviously has gotten a lot of attention over the course of the last week — the issue of the Trayvon Martin ruling. I gave a preliminary statement right after the ruling on Sunday. But watching the debate over the course of the last week, I thought it might be useful for me to expand on my thoughts a little bit.

   First of all, I want to make sure that, once again, I send my thoughts and prayers, as well as Michelle’s, to the family of Trayvon Martin, and to remark on the incredible grace and dignity with which they’ve dealt with the entire situation. I can only imagine what they’re going through, and it’s remarkable how they’ve handled it.

   The second thing I want to say is to reiterate what I said on Sunday, which is that there’s going to be a lot of arguments about the legal issues in the case — I’ll let all the legal analysts and talking heads address those issues. The judge conducted the trial in a professional manner. The prosecution and the defense made their arguments. The juries were properly instructed that in a case such as this reasonable doubt was relevant, and they rendered a verdict. And once the jury has spoken, that’s how our system works. But I did want to just talk a little bit about context and how people have responded to it and how people are feeling.

¹. President Obama is referring here to Jay Carney, the White House Press Secretary from 2011-2014. As the White House Press Secretary, one of Carney’s duties is to answer questions daily from reporters on behalf of the Obama Administration.
You know, when Trayvon Martin was first shot I said that this could have been my son. Another way of saying that is Trayvon Martin could have been me 35 years ago. And when you think about why, in the African American community at least, there's a lot of pain around what happened here, I think it's important to recognize that the African American community is looking at this issue through a set of experiences and a history that doesn't go away.

There are very few African American men in this country who haven't had the experience of being followed when they were shopping in a department store. That includes me. There are very few African American men who haven't had the experience of walking across the street and hearing the locks click on the doors of cars. That happens to me — at least before I was a senator. There are very few African Americans who haven't had the experience of getting on an elevator and a woman clutching her purse nervously and holding her breath until she had a chance to get off. That happens often.

And I don't want to exaggerate this, but those sets of experiences inform how the African American community interprets what happened one night in Florida. And it's inescapable for people to bring those experiences to bear. The African American community is also knowledgeable that there is a history of racial disparities in the application of our criminal laws — everything from the death penalty to enforcement of our drug laws. And that ends up having an impact in terms of how people interpret the case.

Now, this isn't to say that the African American community is naïve about the fact that African American young men are disproportionately involved in the criminal justice system; that they're disproportionately both victims and perpetrators of violence. It's not to make excuses for that fact — although black folks do interpret the reasons for that in a historical context. They understand that some of the violence that takes place in poor black neighborhoods around the country is born out of a very violent past in this country, and that the poverty and dysfunction that we see in those communities can be traced to a very difficult history.

And so the fact that sometimes that's unacknowledged adds to the frustration. And the fact that a lot of African American boys are painted with a broad brush and the excuse is given, well, there are these statistics out there that show that African American boys are more violent — using that as an excuse to then see sons treated differently causes pain.

I think the African American community is also not naïve in understanding that, statistically, somebody like Trayvon Martin was statistically more likely to be shot by a peer than he was by somebody else. So folks understand the challenges that exist for African American boys. But they get frustrated, I think, if they feel that there's no context for it and that context is being denied. And that all contributes I think to a sense that if a white male teen was involved in the same kind of scenario, that, from top to bottom, both the outcome and the aftermath might have been different.

Now, the question for me at least, and I think for a lot of folks, is where do we take this? How do we learn some lessons from this and move in a positive direction? I think it's understandable that there have been demonstrations and vigils and protests, and some of that stuff is just going to have to work its way through, as long as it remains nonviolent. If I see any violence, then I will remind folks that that dishonors what happened to Trayvon Martin and his family. But beyond protests or vigils, the question is, are there some concrete things that we might be able to do.
I know that Eric Holder\(^2\) is reviewing what happened down there, but I think it’s important for people to have some clear expectations here. Traditionally, these are issues of state and local government, the criminal code. And law enforcement is traditionally done at the state and local levels, not at the federal levels.

That doesn’t mean, though, that as a nation we can’t do some things that I think would be productive. So let me just give a couple of specifics that I’m still bouncing around with my staff, so we’re not rolling out some five-point plan, but some areas where I think all of us could potentially focus.

Number one, precisely because law enforcement is often determined at the state and local level, I think it would be productive for the Justice Department, governors, mayors to work with law enforcement about training at the state and local levels in order to reduce the kind of mistrust in the system that sometimes currently exists.

When I was in Illinois, I passed racial profiling legislation, and it actually did just two simple things. One, it collected data on traffic stops and the race of the person who was stopped. But the other thing was it resourced us training police departments across the state on how to think about potential racial bias and ways to further professionalize what they were doing.

And initially, the police departments across the state were resistant, but actually they came to recognize that if it was done in a fair, straightforward way that it would allow them to do their jobs better and communities would have more confidence in them and, in turn, be more helpful in applying the law. And obviously, law enforcement has got a very tough job.

So that’s one area where I think there are a lot of resources and best practices that could be brought to bear if state and local governments are receptive. And I think a lot of them would be. And let’s figure out are there ways for us to push out that kind of training.

Along the same lines, I think it would be useful for us to examine some state and local laws to see if it — if they are designed in such a way that they may encourage the kinds of altercations and confrontations and tragedies that we saw in the Florida case, rather than diffuse potential altercations.

I know that there’s been commentary about the fact that the “stand your ground” laws\(^3\) in Florida were not used as a defense in the case. On the other hand, if we’re sending a message as a society in our communities that someone who is armed potentially has the right to use those firearms even if there’s a way for them to exit from a situation, is that really going to be contributing to the kind of peace and security and order that we’d like to see?

And for those who resist that idea that we should think about something like these “stand your ground” laws, I’d just ask people to consider, if Trayvon Martin was of age and armed, could he have stood his ground on that sidewalk? And do we actually think that he would have been justified in shooting Mr. Zimmerman who had followed him in a car because he felt threatened? And if the answer to that question is at least ambiguous, then it seems to me that we might want to examine those kinds of laws.

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2. Eric Holder was the United States Attorney General under President Obama from 2009-2015. The Attorney General is the leader of the Department of Justice and he or she is the chief lawyer for the United States government.

3. “Stand your ground” refers to a law used in criminal cases to justify the use of force. The defendant argues that they were “standing their ground” in order to protect themselves from a perceived threat. Not all states have adopted this law and it remains a controversial issue, especially in relation to gun laws and issues of racial prejudice.
Number three — and this is a long-term project — we need to spend some time in thinking about how we bolster and reinforce our African American boys. And this is something that Michelle and I talk a lot about. There are a lot of kids out there who need help who are getting a lot of negative reinforcement. And is there more that we can do to give them the sense that their country cares about them and values them and is willing to invest in them?

I'm not naïve about the prospects of some grand, new federal program. I'm not sure that that's what we're talking about here. But I do recognize that as President, I've got some convening power, and there are a lot of good programs that are being done across the country on this front. And for us to be able to gather together business leaders and local elected officials and clergy and celebrities and athletes, and figure out how are we doing a better job helping young African American men feel that they're a full part of this society and that they've got pathways and avenues to succeed — I think that would be a pretty good outcome from what was obviously a tragic situation. And we're going to spend some time working on that and thinking about that.

And then, finally, I think it's going to be important for all of us to do some soul-searching. There has been talk about should we convene a conversation on race. I haven't seen that be particularly productive when politicians try to organize conversations. They end up being stilted and politicized, and folks are locked into the positions they already have. On the other hand, in families and churches and workplaces, there's the possibility that people are a little bit more honest, and at least you ask yourself your own questions about, am I holding as much bias out of myself as I can? Am I judging people as much as I can, based on not the color of their skin, but the content of their character? That would, I think, be an appropriate exercise in the wake of this tragedy.

And let me just leave you with a final thought that, as difficult and challenging as this whole episode has been for a lot of people, I don't want us to lose sight that things are getting better. Each successive generation seems to be making progress in changing attitudes when it comes to race. It doesn't mean we're in a post-racial society. It doesn't mean that racism is eliminated. But when I talk to Malia and Sasha, and I listen to their friends and I see them interact, they're better than we are — they're better than we were — on these issues. And that's true in every community that I've visited all across the country.

And so we have to be vigilant and we have to work on these issues. And those of us in authority should be doing everything we can to encourage the better angels of our nature, as opposed to using these episodes to heighten divisions. But we should also have confidence that kids these days, I think, have more sense than we did back then, and certainly more than our parents did or our grandparents did; and that along this long, difficult journey, we're becoming a more perfect union — not a perfect union, but a more perfect union.

Thank you, guys.

“President Obama’s Remarks on Trayvon Martin Ruling” by President Barack Obama (2013) is in the public domain.
Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: What is President Obama’s purpose in this speech? [RI.6]
   A. to give his opinion on the Trayvon Martin case and condemn the jury’s verdict of “not guilty”
   B. to contextualize the Trayvon Martin case and reconcile people’s reactions to the ruling
   C. to talk about his own experiences with prejudice and how adversity gave him opportunities to grow
   D. to contextualize the Trayvon Martin case and condemn the jury’s verdict of “not guilty”

2. PART B: Which of the following quotes best supports the answer to Part A? [RI.1]
   A. “I send my thoughts and prayers, as well as Michelle’s, to the family of Trayvon Martin... I can only imagine what they’re going through” (Paragraph 3)
   B. “The juries were properly instructed that in a case such as this reasonable doubt was relevant, and they rendered a verdict.” (Paragraph 4)
   C. “It’s important to recognize that the African American community is looking at this issue through a set of experiences and a history that doesn’t go away.” (Paragraph 5)
   D. “where do we take this? How do we learn some lessons from this and move in a positive direction?” (Paragraph 11)

3. In paragraph 5, President Obama remarks: “You know, when Trayvon Martin was first shot I said that this could have been my son. Another way of saying that is Trayvon Martin could have been me 35 years ago.” How does President Obama use rhetoric in this quote to contribute to the overall meaning of his speech?

   [Paragraph 5: “You know, when Trayvon Martin was first shot I said that this could have been my son. Another way of saying that is Trayvon Martin could have been me 35 years ago.”]
4. What connection does President Obama draw between step three of his plan (Paragraphs 21-22) and improving the nation? [RI.3]
   A. He believes that supporting young African American men will help them feel more included in society and prevent future tragedies.
   B. He believes that reaching out to African American children will inspire them to improve their communities and seek out more successful career paths.
   C. He believes that the government should create a new program for young African American men in order to boost their confidence.
   D. He believes that supporting African American leaders will discourage stereotypes against them and all members of the community, especially young men.

5. How does the phrase “a more perfect union” in paragraph 25 contribute to the development of ideas in the speech? [RI.5]
   A. The phrase implies that Obama believes that the United States will never be perfect and Americans should recognize the country’s faults.
   B. The phrase references a similar phrase in the U.S. Constitution, emphasizing the unconstitutional discrimination African Americans have faced and continue to face today.
   C. The phrase emphasizes Obama’s hope for a better, more united future in the U.S. and the efforts that must be made to reach this.
   D. The phrase suggests that Obama believes that the country has substantially improved in the past few decades and does not require much more improvement.
Appendix O

“An Obstacle” Poem and Questions
An Obstacle
By Charlotte Perkins Gilman
1884

Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860-1935) was a writer and lecturer for social reform. Gilman was a feminist during a time when it was not socially acceptable to be one. As you read "An Obstacle," consider the context of the poem and what it was like to live as a woman with in the late 19th century. Take notes on the figurative language and personification used in the poem, and how they contribute to the poem’s message.

[1] I was climbing up a mountain-path
With many things to do,
Important business of my own,
And other people’s too,

[5] When I ran against a Prejudice
That quite cut off the view.

My work was such as could not wait,
My path quite clearly showed,
My strength and time were limited,

[10] I carried quite a load;
And there that hulking Prejudice
Sat all across the road.

So I spoke to him politely,
For he was huge and high,

[15] And begged that he would move a bit
And let me travel by.
He smiled, but as for moving! --
He didn’t even try.

And then I reasoned quietly

[20] With that colossal1 mule:
My time was short -- no other path --
The mountain winds were cool.
I argued like a Solomon;2
He sat there like a fool.

[25] Then I flew into a passion,
and I danced and howled and swore.
I pelted and belabored him
Till I was stiff and sore;
He got as mad as I did --

[30] But he sat there as before.

1. Colossal (adjective): extremely large
2. A wise person
And then I begged him on my knees;
I might be kneeling still
If so I hoped to move that mass
Of obdurate\textsuperscript{3} ill-will --

[35] As well invite the monument
To vacate Bunker Hill!\textsuperscript{4}

So I sat before him helpless,
In an ecstasy\textsuperscript{5} of woe --
The mountain mists were rising fast,

[40] The sun was sinking slow --
When a sudden inspiration came,
As sudden winds do blow.

I took my hat, I took my stick,
My load I settled fair,

[45] I approached that awful incubus\textsuperscript{6}
With an absent-minded air --
And I walked directly through him,
As if he wasn't there!

\textit{An Obstacle} by Charlotte Perkins Gilman is in the public domain.

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3. **Obdurate** (adjective): stubborn
4. The Bunker Hill Monument was built to commemorate the Battle of Bunker Hill, one of the first major battles in the American Revolutionary War. The monument is a towering, granite obelisk.
5. **Ecstasy** (noun): an overwhelming state of emotion, usually joy or rapture
6. A male demon known for attacking women
Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. How does the setting of the poem contribute to its central theme?  [RL.2]
   A. The winding path implies that the speaker is lost, literally and figuratively, emphasizing the theme of identity.
   B. The speaker climbs a mountain path, which suggests an upward struggle; thus, the setting underscores the central theme of resilience in the face of adversity.
   C. The misty forest setting (as well as Prejudice's strange appearance) suggests some sort of supernatural element, contributing to the theme of fear.
   D. The poem takes place over the course of a day and ends as the sun begins to set; thus the linear setting (a day coming to a close) contributes to the theme of death.

2. Summarize how the speaker responds to Prejudice over the course of the poem. Be sure to include any figurative interpretations or meaning of these reactions.  [RL.3]

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

3. PART A: Which of the following statements best explains the reference to the monument of Bunker Hill in lines 35-36?  [RL.4]
   A. The reference to the monument of Bunker Hill is an indication that the poem takes place in the Bunker Hill region (i.e. Massachusetts).
   B. The reference to the monument of Bunker Hill foreshadows the speaker's eventual defeat of the looming enemy (i.e. Prejudice).
   C. The speaker compares Prejudice to the monument of Bunker Hill to describe Prejudice's physical size.
   D. The speaker compares Prejudice to the monument of Bunker Hill to describe Prejudice's level of stubbornness; like the massive monument, he cannot be moved.

4. PART B: Which of the following phrases best supports the answer to Part A?  [RL.1]
   A. "that hulking Prejudice / Sat all across the road" (Lines 11-12)
   B. "I might be kneeling still / If so I hoped to move that mass / Of obdurate ill-will--" (Lines 32-34)
   C. "The mountain mists were rising fast, / The sun was sinking slow--" (Lines 39-40)
   D. "And I walked directly through him, / As if he wasn't there!" (Lines 47-48)
5. How does the final stanza contribute to the speaker’s developing point of view? [RL.6]
   A. The final stanza reveals that Prejudice was only in her head.
   B. The final stanza reveals the speaker’s own stubborn nature, contributing to the poet’s characterization of her.
   C. The final stanza shows the speaker overcoming Prejudice by how she views him (i.e. by electing to ignore him).
   D. The final stanza develops the speaker’s point of view because she can suddenly handle carrying the heavy load she bears.
Appendix P
Peer Revision Blog Post
Peer Revision Blog Post

First, post your essay as a blog post on your blog. Next, you will read the essays that your group members have posted in their blogs. As a comment, post responses to the following prompts.

*Remember, you are trying to help your group members improve their writing, so be constructive in your criticism. Rude or cruel comments will not be tolerated.*

1. Identify 3 things you enjoyed about their essay
2. Identify 3 things that could use improvement
3. Are they following correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation rules? Are all things capitalized that should be? Are they using commas, dashes, and ellipses correctly? (Think about all that we have learned through our Grammar Games. Are they using these correctly?)
4. Finally, look through the rubric for the essay (linked here) and give them a score in each category. Also include an explanation for why you gave them each score and how they could improve to reach a better score in each category.
Appendix Q
Self Assessment Blog Post
Self Assessment Blog Post
You will be creating a blog post that assesses your own work on this essay using the prompts below. Think critically about the work you have put into the essay and how you have learned about informative writing throughout this unit.

1. As you reread the essay you wrote for this class, what strikes you as the strengths of your writing?
2. What would you do to improve it if you had more time?
3. When you look back at the essay process, what was the part you enjoyed working on?
4. What was the most difficult part of this essay?
5. What is one thing you have learned from this essay?
6. What do you want your reader to learn from this essay?
7. What is one goal you have for your writing in the future?
8. Finally, look through the rubric for the essay (linked here) and give yourself a score in each category. Also include an explanation for why you gave each score and how you could improve to reach a better score in each category.

You can include any other information you think of as you reflect on this essay and the writing process as a whole.
References


