

Authors and Artists

This fourth four-week unit of eighth grade examines the similarities and differences between literary authors and artists.



OVERVIEW

In this unit, students step back and consider the motivations of authors and artists alike: What inspires artists? Are their inspirations similar or different? How is the process of creating a painting or sculpture similar to and different from the process of writing a story or poem? Students read books written about artists and study artwork found in museums across America. Students work with classmates to discern the unspoken meaning in literature and art. Students also discuss illustrations and other forms of commercial art, looking for differences and similarities in fine and commercial art, in terms of both its motivation and its presentation. They write an informative/explanatory essay about an artist of interest. The unit ends with an informative/explanatory essay in response to the essential question.

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

How are artists and authors similar?

FOCUS STANDARDS

These Focus Standards have been selected for the unit from the Common Core State Standards.

RL.8.2: Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text.

RI.8.5: Analyze in detail the structure of a specific paragraph in a text, including the role of particular sentences in developing and refining a key concept.

RI.8.8: Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is sound and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; recognize when irrelevant evidence is introduced.

W.8.2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

SL.8.2: Analyze the purpose of information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and evaluate the motives (e.g., social, commercial, political) behind its presentation.

L.8.5: Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

L.8.5(b): Use the relationship between particular words to better understand each of the words.

L.8.5(c): Distinguish among the connotations (associations) of words with similar denotations (definitions) (e.g., *bullheaded*, *willful*, *firm*, *persistent*, *resolute*).

SUGGESTED STUDENT OBJECTIVES

- Determine an author's point of view in a text, compare it with an artist's perspective in a work of art, and discuss the effect that perspective has on the work.
- Compare and contrast authors' and artists' motivations for creativity.
- Conduct research on an artist of choice; define and refine a research question as research proceeds.
- Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used to describe authors and artists, including figurative and technical vocabulary.

SUGGESTED WORKS

(E) indicates a CCSS exemplar text; (EA) indicates a text from a writer with other works identified as exemplars.

LITERARY TEXTS

Stories

- *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler* (E. L. Konigsburg)
- *Leaving Eldorado* (Joann Mazzio)
- *Talking With Tebe: Clementine Hunter, Memory Artist* (Mary E. Lyons)
- *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (James Joyce)

Poetry

- *Is This Forever, or What? Poems & Paintings from Texas* (Naomi Shihab Nye)

INFORMATIONAL TEXTS

Nonfiction

- *A Short Walk Around the Pyramids & Through the World of Art* (Philip M. Isaacson) (E)
- *Smithsonian Q&A: American Art and Artists—The Ultimate Question and Answer Book* (Tricia Wright)

Biography

- *Vincent van Gogh: Portrait of an Artist* (Jan Greenberg and Sandra Jordan) (E)
- *Norman Rockwell: Storyteller with a Brush* (Beverly Gherman)
- *Sparky: The Life and Art of Charles Schulz* (Beverly Gherman)
- *Andy Warhol, Prince of Pop* (Jan Greenberg and Sandra Jordan)

- *A Caldecott Celebration: Seven Artists and their Paths to the Caldecott Medal* (Leonard S. Marcus)
- *Marc Chagall* (Artists in Their Time Series) (Jude Welton)
- *Mary Cassatt: Portrait of an American Impressionist* (Tom Streissguth)
- *Artist to Artist: 23 Major Illustrators Talk to Children About Their Art* (Eric Carle, Mitsumasa Anno, and Quentin Blake)
- *Vincent van Gogh: Sunflowers and Swirly Stars* (Smart About Art Series) (Brad Bucks and Joan Holub)
- *Henri Matisse: Drawing with Scissors* (Smart About Art Series) (Jane O'Connor and Keesia Johnson)
- *Pablo Picasso: Breaking All the Rules* (Smart About Art Series) (True Kelley)
- *The Lives of the Artists* (Giorgio Vasari) (excerpt on Michelangelo or Leonardo)
- *Maya Angelou* (Just the Facts Biographies) (L. Patricia Kite)
- *Invincible Louisa: The Story of the Author of Little Women* (Cornelia Meigs)
- *Margaret Wise Brown: Awakened by the Moon* (Leonard S. Marcus)
- *Mark Twain* (Just the Facts Biographies) (Susan Bivin Aller)
- *Bram Stoker: The Man Who Wrote Dracula* (Great Life Stories) (Steven Otfinoski)
- *Aung San Suu Kyi: Fearless Voice of Burma* (Whitney Stewart)

Pictorial History

- *Buffalo Hunt* (Russell Freedman) (EA)
- *The Buffalo and the Indians: A Shared Destiny* (Dorothy Hinshaw Patent)

Picture Books (as an Introduction to This Unit)

- *Museum ABC* (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)
- *Museum Shapes* (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

ART, MUSIC, AND MEDIA

Art

- Édouard Manet, *Dead Toreador* (1864)
- Andrea Mantegna, *Lamentation over the Dead Christ* (1480)
- Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, *Supper at Emmaus* (1601)
- Paul Cézanne, *The Card Players* (1890–1892)
- Paolo Uccello, *Niccolo Mauruzi da Tolentino at the Battle of San Romano* (1438–1440)
- Hieronymus Bosch, *The Garden of Earthly Delights* (1503–1504)
- Chuck Close, *Fanny/Fingerpainting* (1985)
- Sylvia Plimack Mangold, *The Linden Tree* (1988)

SAMPLE ACTIVITIES AND ASSESSMENTS

1. INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY/CLASS DISCUSSION

Read *Museum ABC* or *Museum Shapes* with the class. What is the author's purpose in creating these texts? How do these books provide a different way of looking at art and artists? How is this presentation

similar to or different from information you find online? Consider creating, as a class, an ABC book or digital presentation about the art and artists studied in this unit. (RI.8.1, RI.8.6, RI.8.7)

2. ART/CLASS DISCUSSION

Examine and discuss the variety of perspectives used by the artists in the artworks (e.g., worm's-eye view, sitting at the table, far away, or up close). Identify the perspective in each work. How does the perspective affect the viewer's relationship to the work? For instance, in the works by Caravaggio and Cézanne, does it seem as if there is a spot left for the viewer at the table? How does this differ from the perspective in Bosch's work? What about Close's? How do these artists use perspective to draw viewers in? Write responses to these questions in your journal and share with a partner prior to class discussion. Discuss how this compares to authors' use of perspective in the characters they create. (SL.8.1, W.8.1, W.8.2)

3. NOTE TAKING ON BIOGRAPHIES

As you read biographies of authors and artists, take notes in your journal or on a spreadsheet about the creator's motivation for creativity. As you take notes about these categories, think about the similarities and differences between authors and artists. Be sure to note page numbers with relevant information so you can go back and cite the text during class discussion.

- Who is the focus of the biography?
- When did the author or artist first know that he/she was a creative person?
- How did the time in which the author or artist lived, or his/her physical location (i.e., urban or rural), affect his/her work?
- What unique words and phrases are used to describe the artist?

Prior to class discussion, your teacher may give you the opportunity to share your notes with a partner who read the same text. (RI.8.1, RI.8.2, RI.8.3, RI.8.8, RL.8.1, RL.8.2, RL.8.3, RL.8.4)

4. CLASS DISCUSSION

Compare and contrast the lives of authors and artists using the information from your notes. Can you make any generalizations about how authors and artists are similar? What are they? After class discussion, create a Venn diagram in your journal or in an online template that outlines the similarities and differences among the lives of the artists. Post your thoughts on the classroom blog in order to continue the conversation with your classmates. (SL.8.1, RL.8.4)

5. RESEARCH PROJECT/BIO-POEM

Read a variety of informational texts, in print and online, about authors and artists, and choose one that interests you. Write a bio-poem about this person that includes important facts you think your classmates should know. Include audio or visual displays in your presentation, such as digital slides or a movie, as appropriate. Before turning in your poem, edit your writing for the grammar conventions studied so far this year. (RI.8.1, RI.8.8, RI.8.9, W.8.7, L.8.1a,b,c; L.8.2, L.8.3)

6. RESEARCH AND INFORMATIVE/EXPLANATORY WRITING

Look at the websites listed earlier and read through *A Short Walk Around the Pyramids & Through the World of Art* by Philip M. Isaacson in order to select an artist whose work you enjoy. Choose at least two different biographies about this artist to read. As you read the biographies, determine the figurative, connotative, and technical meanings of words and phrases as they are used to describe the artist and his/her work. Supplement this reading with additional research about the artist, his/her artistic style,

preferred subjects, and where his/her art is exhibited. Possibly try to arrange a web interview with the artist. Work with classmates to strengthen your writing through planning, revising, and editing your essay. Edit your writing for the grammar conventions studied so far this year. Your teacher may give you the option of adding a multimedia component to your research report—either by creating a digital slide presentation to highlight key points, or by reading your essay set to music and images from your country of choice. Present both to the class. (RI.8.1, RI.8.2, RI.8.3, RI.8.4, RI.8.5, RI.8.8, W.8.2, W.8.5, W.8.6, W.8.7, L.8.1a,b,c; L.8.2, L.8.3)

7. INFORMATIVE/EXPLANATORY WRITING

Read and compare the use of humor in *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler* by E. L. Konigsburg to the use of humor in *Vincent Van Gogh: Sunflowers and Swirly Stars* by Brad Bucks and Joan Holub. How does the use of humor engage the reader? How do artists use humor in their art to engage the observer? Write a well-developed response to these questions, citing at least three specific examples from the texts. Share with a partner prior to class discussion. Edit your writing for the grammar conventions studied so far this year. (RI.8.1, RI.8.2, RI.8.3, RI.8.5, RL.8.2, RL.8.6, L.8.1a,b,c; L.8.2, L.8.3)

8. INFORMATIVE/EXPLANATORY WRITING

From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler takes place in an art museum. How does the setting contribute to this story? Why? How are the characters' motivations (Claudia, Jamie, Mrs. Frankweiler) similar and different? Write a well-developed response to these questions, citing at least three specific examples from the text. Edit your writing for the grammar conventions studied so far this year. Share with a partner prior to class discussion. Enter your response on the classroom blog to encourage additional dialogue about this topic with your classmates. (RL.8.1, RL.8.2, RL.8.6, L.8.1a,b,c; L.8.2, L.8.3)

9. LITERARY RESPONSE

How do Maude's circumstances in *Leaving Eldorado* by Joann Mazzio hinder her dreams of becoming an artist? How do these circumstances motivate her? Does this story remind you of others read? Why? Write responses to these questions in your journal or on the classroom blog, citing specific examples and page numbers from the text. (RL.8.1, RL.8.6, RL.8.9)

10. LITERARY RESPONSE

How does James Joyce's stream-of-consciousness style in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* help you understand the character's motivations? Write responses to these questions in your journal, citing specific examples and page numbers from the text. (RL.8.1, RL.8.6, RL.8.9)

11. CLASS DISCUSSION

Look at a variety of art: fine art, illustrations, ads, pictorial histories, and so on. Evaluate the motives (e.g., social, commercial, or political) behind each presentation. How does the motivation affect the message? Why? Write responses to these questions in your journal and share with a partner prior to class discussion. Your teacher may ask you to upload images of the art onto a shared spreadsheet. Each class member will add either audio or text that articulates his/her thoughts regarding the artist's motivation. (SL.8.1, SL.8.2)

12. RECITATION/FLUENCY

After reading selections from *Is This Forever, or What? Poems & Paintings from Texas* by Naomi Shihab Nye, select your favorite poem. How does the structure of the poem selected contribute to its meaning and style? How does the point of view of the author create effects such as suspense or humor?

Share your insights with a partner and then recite your favorite poem for your classmates. Record your performance using a video camera so you can evaluate it. (RL.8.5, SL.8.6)

13. WORD STUDY

[Continuing activity from the third unit.] Add words found, learned, and used throughout this unit to your personal dictionary (e.g., from *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler*: *inconspicuous*, *impostor*, and *stowaway*; elements of art and principles of design: color, line, proportion, shape, space, unity, balance, form, texture, and rhythm). This unit focuses on distinguishing among the connotations of these words as they are used by artists. This dictionary will be used all year long to explore the semantics (meanings) of words and their origins. (L.8.4, L.8.5b,c)

14. ART/CLASS DISCUSSION

If the elements and principles of art and design are the building blocks for artists, what are the building blocks for writers? Write responses to these questions in your journal and share with a partner prior to class discussion. Be prepared to defend your position with examples. Your teacher may invite you and your classmates to discuss the question on the classroom blog. (SL.8.1, SL.8.4)

15. INFORMATIVE/EXPLANATORY WRITING

As you reflect on everything read, written, and discussed in this unit, write an informative/explanatory essay in response to the essential question: How are artists and authors similar? Make sure to include words and phrases learned as part of word study, including connotative language. After your teacher reviews your first draft, work with a partner to strengthen your writing and edit it for the grammar conventions studied so far this year. Be prepared to record your essay and upload it as a podcast or other multimedia format on the class web page for this unit. (W.8.4, W.8.9a,b, SL.8.1, L.8.1a,b,c; L.8.2, L.8.3, L.8.5b,c)

16. MECHANICS/GRAMMAR WALL

As a class, continue adding to the Mechanics/Grammar bulletin board started in Unit One. Remember—once skills are taught in a mini-lesson and listed on the bulletin board, you are expected to edit your work for these elements before publication. (L.8.1, L.8.2, L.8.3)

17. VOCABULARY/WORD WALL

As a class, continue adding to the Vocabulary Word Wall bulletin board where, throughout the year, you will add and sort words as you learn them in each unit of study. (L.8.4)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- *Artist Pablo Picasso Was Born on This Day in 1881* (ReadWriteThink) (RI.8.2)
- WebQuest *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler*
- *Looking at Art: Seeing Questions* (Incredible @rt Department)
- *How to Look at Art* (Kinder Art)
- *Most Famous World Art Museums* (ExploringAbroad.Com)
- *Art Museums in the USA* (ExploringAbroad.Com)
- *10 Breathtaking Pencil and Ink Works of Art* (Frikoo.Com)
- *Extreme Engineering: 15 of Man's Most Impressive Construction Projects* (Frikoo.Com)

TERMINOLOGY

Biography
Humor

Irony
Mood

Perspective
Point of view

Style
Tone

Grade Eight, Unit Four Sample Lesson Plan

Vincent van Gogh: Portrait of an Artist by Jan Greenberg and Sandra Jordan

In this series of ten lessons, students read *Vincent van Gogh: Portrait of an Artist* by Jan Greenberg and Sandra Jordan, and they:

- Explore the details of Vincent van Gogh's life (RI.8.1, RI.8.2, SL.8.1, SL.8.4)
- Investigate influences on van Gogh's style of painting (RI.8.2, RI.8.7, SL.8.1, SL.8.4, L.8.6)
- Study select paintings by van Gogh (W.8.7, SL.8.1, SL.8.4, L.8.6)
- Examine the content of select letters by van Gogh (RL.8.2, RL.8.4, SL.8.1, SL.8.4, L.8.6)
- Exhibit independent study results (SL.8.5, SL.8.6)

Summary

Lesson I: "A Brabant Boy, 1853–1875"

- Identify van Gogh's birthplace on a world map (RI.8.1, SL.6.6)
- Investigate biographical details about young van Gogh's life (RI.8.1, RI.8.2, RI.8.7, SL.8.1, SL.8.4, L.8.6)
- Note the members of van Gogh's family (RI.8.1, SL.8.1)

Lesson II: "Vincent in England, 1876–1877" and "The Missionary, 1879–1880"

- Record van Gogh's early struggles (RI.8.1, RI.8.2, RI.8.3, L.8.6)
- Explore van Gogh's initial exploration of drawing (RI.8.1, RI.8.2, SL.8.1, SL.8.4, L.8.6)
- Critically examine the drawing, *Square in Ramsgate* (1876) (RI.8.7, W.8.7, SL.8.1, SL.8.4, L.8.6)
- Document preliminary impressions of van Gogh's character (RI.8.6, L.8.6)

<p>Lesson III: “In Love, 1881–1883” and “Vincent the Dog, 1883–1885”</p> <p>Explore van Gogh’s growing passion for drawing following the reading of this passage by Greenberg and Jordan: “Since he first picked up a pencil in the Borinage, he had focused on drawing, persuaded that it was the foundation of everything. Now, after several years of strenuous effort, he felt the time had come to start painting, and his letters gloried in his newfound pleasure.” (p. 36) (RI.8.1, RI.8.2, RI.8.4, SL.8.1, L.8.6)</p> <p>Examine the biographical significance of van Gogh’s letters (RI.8.6)</p> <p>Explore the content of van Gogh’s letter to Theo dated April 30, 1885 (RL.8.2, RL.8.4, SL.8.1, SL.8.4, L.8.6)</p> <p>View <i>The Potato Eaters</i> and discuss why the painting is considered “one of the great paintings of the nineteenth century” (p. 45) (RI.8.7, W.8.7, SL.8.1, SL.8.5)</p>	<p>Lesson IV: “A Country Bumpkin in Paris, 1886–1887” and “Vincent and Friends, 1887–1888”</p> <p>Note the influence of Impressionist painting and other sources — such as Japanese woodcuts — on van Gogh’s work (W.8.7, W.8.8, RI.8.3, SL.8.1)</p> <p>Explore van Gogh’s relationships with the “bohemian artists’ community of Paris” (RI.8.1, RI.8.2, SL.8.1, SL.8.4)</p> <p>Examine the artistic vision of the Impressionist movement (W.8.7, RI.8.2, RI.8.7, SL.8.1, L.8.6)</p> <p>Investigate the origins of the name “Impressionism” (W.8.7)</p> <p>Explore the background of leading Impressionist artists (W.8.7, RI.8.1, RI.8.2, SL.8.1, SL.8.4, L.8.6)</p> <p>View works by artists van Gogh met in Paris (RI.8.7, W.8.7, SL.8.1, SL.8.5)</p>
<p>Lesson V: “Vincent in Arles, 1888–1889” and “Arles: ‘A High Yellow Note,’ 1888–1889”</p> <p>Explore the details of van Gogh’s letter to Émile Bernard from June 18, 1888 (available online) (RL.8.2, RL.8.4, SL.8.1, SL.8.4, L.8.6)</p> <p>Study paintings by van Gogh (e.g., <i>Bedroom in Arles</i>, <i>The Starry Night</i>, <i>The Night Café</i>, <i>Still Life with Sunflowers</i>) (RI.8.7, W.8.7)</p> <p>Probe the authors’ comment that the “artist, who had written earlier that his brush strokes had no system, was producing works in a style that would forever be unique to him, even those canvases without his now famous signature, the single name Vincent” (p. 69) (RL.8.1, RL.8.4, SL.8.1, SL.8.4, L.8.5)</p> <p>Examine van Gogh’s years in Arles and his friendship with Paul Gauguin (RI.8.1, RI.8.3, RI.8.7, SL.8.1, SL.8.4)</p> <p>Note van Gogh’s illness and examine <i>Self-Portrait with Bandaged Ear</i> (RI.8.1, SL.8.1)</p>	<p>Lesson VI: “St.-Remy: The Asylum, 1889–1890,” “Auvers-sur-Oise: The Last Refuge, 1890,” and “Postscript”</p> <p>Explore van Gogh’s illness (RI.8.1, RI.8.3, SL.8.1, SL.8.4, L.8.6)</p> <p>Examine the content of van Gogh’s letter to Theo from May 4, 1890 (RL.8.2, RL.8.4)</p> <p>Probe van Gogh’s death and examine the painting <i>Wheatfield with Crows</i> (RI.8.1, RI.8.2, SL.8.1, SL.8.4)</p> <p>Note the contribution of Jo, Theo’s wife, to posterity (RI.8.1, RI.8.2, SL.8.1)</p>

<p>Lessons VII–IX: The Paintings and the Letters of van Gogh</p> <p>View self-portraits by van Gogh (W.8.7, RI.8.7, SL.8.1, SL.8.5)</p> <p>Survey the letters of van Gogh (RL.8.2, RL.8.4, SL.8.4, L.8.6)</p> <p>Select a letter and a painting from the same period in van Gogh's life (available online) (RL.8.2, RL.8.4)</p> <p>Explore the content of the letter (RL.8.2, RL.8.4, SL.8.1, SL.8.4, L.8.6)</p> <p>Examine the painting (W.8.7, RI.8.7, SL.8.1, SL.8.5)</p> <p>Express impressions of both letter and painting in paragraph form (W.8.2, SL.8.1, SL.8.4, L.8.6)</p> <p>Edit the paragraph (W.8.2, L.8.1, L.8.2)</p> <p>Prepare the painting, the letter, and the paragraph for presentation (L.8.3)</p>	<p>Lesson X: The Exhibit</p> <p>View the exhibit of van Gogh's paintings and letters</p> <p>Examine classmates' impressions (SL.8.1, SL.8.5)</p> <p>Explore shared experiences (SL.8.1, SL.8.4, L.8.6)</p>
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Lesson IV: "A Country Bumpkin in Paris, 1886–1887" and "Vincent and Friends, 1887–1888"

Objectives

- Note the influence of Impressionist painting and other sources — such as Japanese woodcuts — on van Gogh's work (W.8.7, W.8.8, RI.8.3, SL.8.1)
- Explore van Gogh's relationships with the "bohemian artists' community of Paris" (RI.8.1, RI.8.2, SL.8.1, SL.8.4)
- Examine the artistic vision of the Impressionist movement (W.8.7, RI.8.2, RI.8.7, SL.8.1, L.8.6)
- Investigate the origins of the name "Impressionism" (W.8.7)
- Explore the background of leading Impressionist artists (W.8.7, RI.8.1, RI.8.2, SL.8.1, SL.8.4, L.8.6)
- View works by artists van Gogh met in Paris (RI.8.7, W.8.7, SL.8.1, SL.8.5)

Required Materials

- ☐ Computers with Internet access
- ☐ Library
- ☐ *Vincent van Gogh: Portrait of an Artist*, by Jan Greenberg and Sandra Jordan

Procedures

1. Lead-In:
Read "A Country Bumpkin in Paris, 1886–1887," and "Vincent and Friends, 1887–1888," aloud.

2. Step by Step:

- a. In class discussion, students recall details about van Gogh's days in Paris and his relationship with the Impressionist artists. They note the authors' description of the influence that Claude Monet, Camille Pissarro, and Paul Signac had on van Gogh.
- b. In small groups, using online sources or the library, students explore the artistic vision of the Impressionist movement. They note the origin of the artistic movement's name (Claude Monet's painting, *Impression, Sunrise*). There are many good online sources; here are a few recommended sites:
 - "Impressionism: Art and Modernity" (The Metropolitan Museum of Art); "Tour: Impressionism" (National Gallery of Art)
- c. Assign a specific artist to each group. The students are responsible for identifying key biographical information about the artist. They explore the artist's role in the Impressionist movement. They also prepare a five-minute multimedia presentation where they share their findings with the rest of the class. The list is likely to include:

Frédéric Bazille: 1841–1870

Émile Bernard: 1868–1941

Paul Cézanne: 1839–1906

Edgar Degas: 1834–1917

Paul Gauguin: 1848–1903

Armand Guillaumin: 1841–1927

Édouard Manet: 1832–1883

Claude Monet: 1840–1926

Camille Pissarro: 1830–1903

Pierre-Auguste Renoir: 1841–1919

Georges Seurat: 1859–1891

Paul Signac: 1863–1935

Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec: 1864–1901

- d. Presentations of findings.

3. Closure:

Students revisit Greenberg and Jordan's assertion that the artists van Gogh met in Paris influenced his work. (Perhaps display some paintings that illustrate the influence that they discuss.)

Differentiation

Advanced

- Research the Post-Impressionist movement. Learn what distinguished it from Impressionism and locate van Gogh's place in each movement.
- Give students an opportunity to bookmark the most helpful websites for other classmates to conduct their research. Collect the websites on a web portal.

- Encourage students to develop a page for the class website where presentations can be uploaded and viewed by others after class presentations.
- Encourage students to research some lesser-known Impressionist artists to increase the number of artists studied. Students should analyze and evaluate why their artist may be less well-known than van Gogh.

Struggling

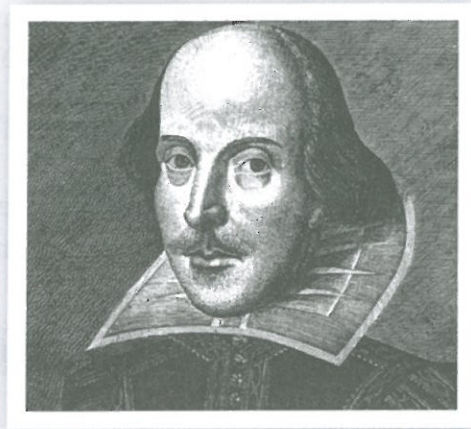
- Have a print version of the text available for students to write upon, or mark with sticky notes prior to class discussion. If students need to listen to the passage read multiple times, have an audio version available for individual students.
- Have a four-column graphic organizer available for students where they can note the influence of Claude Monet, Camille Pissarro, and Paul Signac on van Gogh. Students should also note how van Gogh's paintings differed from those artists' paintings.
- Allow students to begin their research using the websites chosen by classmates (listed above).
- Provide students with a graphic organizer to help structure research and presentations.
- Students may videotape themselves in a run-through of the presentation using a video camera in order to evaluate what works and what needs improvement.

Homework/Assessment

N/A

Dramatically Speaking

This four-week unit of eighth grade continues an examination of the arts, focusing on the dramatic performance of plays, speeches, and poems.



OVERVIEW

In this unit, students read plays such as *Sorry, Wrong Number* and compare them to a Shakespeare play or a film with similar themes. They read and listen to famous speeches by Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Barbara Jordan. They read and perform poetry by Nikki Giovanni, Pablo Neruda, and T. S. Eliot. While exploring the different genres, students analyze lines of dialogue, scenes, or words that are critical to the development of the story or message. They analyze how the use of flashback can create a sense of suspense in the reader/listener. They pay special attention to diction, and how connotation may be enhanced through tone and inflection. Students must also choose a genre that they prefer and defend that choice, strengthening their skills at writing arguments. Finally, this unit ends with an informative/explanatory essay in response to the essential question.

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

How is reading a speech, poem, or script for a play different from performing

FOCUS STANDARDS

These Focus Standards have been selected for the unit from the Common Core State Standards.

RL.8.3: Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision.

RL.8.6: Analyze how differences in the points of view of the characters and the audience or reader (e.g., created through the use of dramatic irony) create such effects as suspense or humor.

RL.8.7: Analyze the extent to which a filmed or live production of a story or drama stays faithful to or departs from the text or script, evaluating the choices made by the director or actors.

W.8.1: Critique and write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

SL.8.3: Delineate a speaker’s argument and specific claims, evaluating the soundness of the reasoning and relevance and sufficiency of the evidence and identifying when irrelevant evidence is introduced.

L.8.5: Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

L.8.5(a): Interpret figures of speech (e.g., verbal irony, puns) in context.

L.8.5(b): Use the relationship between particular words to better understand each of the words.

SUGGESTED STUDENT OBJECTIVES

- Read and discuss a variety of dramatic fiction and nonfiction about plays, playwrights, public speakers, and poets.
- Analyze how particular lines of dialogue in *Sorry, Wrong Number* propel the action and reveal aspects of a character.
- Compare and contrast characters, plots, themes, settings, and literary techniques used in plays and films.
- Analyze the extent to which a filmed or radio production of *Sorry, Wrong Number* stays faithful to or departs from the text or script, evaluating the choices made by the director or actors.
- Conduct research on a playwright or public speaker of choice.
- Discuss how creating a sound argument is essential to engaging listeners in a speech.
- Perform for classmates in a variety of styles (e.g., drama, poetry, or speeches).
- Participate in group discussions and critically evaluate classmates’ arguments.

SUGGESTED WORKS

(E) indicates a CCSS exemplar text; (EA) indicates a text from a writer with other works identified as exemplars.

LITERARY TEXTS

Stories

- *King of Shadows* (Susan Cooper) (EA)

Poetry

- “A Poem for My Librarian, Mrs. Long” in *Acolytes: Poems* (Nikki Giovanni) (E)
- *The Book of Questions* (Pablo Neruda) (E)
- “Macavity” (T. S. Eliot)

Drama

- *Sorry, Wrong Number* (Lucille Fletcher) (E)
- *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (William Shakespeare)
- *Zora Neale Hurston: Collected Plays* (Zora Neale Hurston)
- *Famous Americans: 22 Short Plays for the Classroom, Grades 4–8* (Liza Schafer, editor)
- *A Raisin in the Sun* (Lorraine Hansberry)

INFORMATIONAL TEXTS

Biographies

- *The Play's the Thing: A Story About William Shakespeare* (Creative Minds Biographies) (Ruth Turk)
- *Hitchcock on Hitchcock: Selected Writings and Interviews* (Alfred Hitchcock)
- *Franklin Delano Roosevelt* (Russell Freedman)
- *Who Was Ronald Reagan?* (Joyce Milton)
- *Barbara Jordan: Voice of Democracy (Book Report Biography)* (Lisa Renee Rhodes)
- *Memoirs* (Pablo Neruda)
- *Sorrow's Kitchen: The Life and Folklore of Zora Neale Hurston* (Great Achievers Series) (Mary E. Lyons)

Literary Criticism

- "Shakespeare's Plays: Comedy" (Debora B. Schwartz)
- "Midsummer Night's Dream" (D. J. Snider)

Speeches

- "The Banking Crisis" (First Fireside Chat, Franklin Delano Roosevelt) (March 12, 1933)
- "A Time for Choosing" (Ronald Reagan) (October 27, 1964)
- Keynote Address to the Democratic National Convention (Barbara Jordan) (July 12, 1976)

ART, MUSIC, AND MEDIA

Music and Lyrics

- "Macavity," from *Cats* (Andrew Lloyd Webber)

Film

- Anatole Litvak, dir., *Sorry, Wrong Number* (1948)
- Alfred Hitchcock, dir., *Dial M for Murder* (1954)
- Michael Hoffman, dir., *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1999)
- David Mallet, dir., *Cats* (1998, PBS Great Performances)
- Daniel Petrie, dir., *A Raisin in the Sun* (1961)
- Mirra Bank, dir., *Spirit to Spirit: Nikki Giovanni* (1988)

SAMPLE ACTIVITIES AND ASSESSMENTS

1. LITERARY GRAPHIC ORGANIZER

As you read the plays (and view the films) in this unit, take notes in your journal or on a spreadsheet about particular lines of dialogue or incidents that propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision. Be sure to note page numbers with relevant information so you can cite the text during class discussion.

- What is the setting of the play?
- Who are the major and minor characters?

- What is the theme of the play?
- What problems are faced by the character(s)? How does he/she overcome this challenge?
- Which lines of dialogue or events were pivotal to the play? Why?
- Describe the use of literary techniques, such as flashback, in the play. How do these reveal the point of view of the character and create suspense?

Prior to class discussion, your teacher may give you the opportunity to share your notes with a partner who read the same text. (RL.8.1, RL.8.2, RL.8.3, RL.8.6, RL.8.7)

2. CLASS DISCUSSION

Compare and contrast the plots, settings, themes, characters, and literary techniques used. Can you begin to make any generalizations about how films and plays have different effects on viewers from the effects literature has on readers? What are they? Evaluate the claims made by your classmates and evaluate the soundness of reasoning they use in discussion. After class discussion, create a Venn diagram in your journal or by using an online template that outlines the similarities and differences among the techniques used. Post your thoughts on the classroom blog in order to continue the conversation with your classmates. (SL.8.1, SL.8.3, RL.8.6)

3. WRITING (ARGUMENT)

Why have Shakespeare's plays, such as *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, stood the test of time? Why do we study these plays today? Talk through your ideas with a partner. Then, write an argument in support of studying Shakespeare in eighth grade, including citations from selections read. You may choose to make connections between the plays and other novels, plays, poems, or films. Post your thoughts on a class blog in order to continue the conversation with others outside of your classroom. (W.8.1, W.8.4, SL.8.1, RL.8.6, RL.8.9)

4. DRAMATIZATION/CLASS DISCUSSION

Read the script of *Sorry, Wrong Number* with your classmates. Discuss how the use of flashbacks adds suspense to the tone of the play. Then listen to the radio drama version and/or view the film version and compare these to the written version. Analyze the extent to which a filmed or live production of a story or drama stays faithful to or departs from the text or script, evaluating the choices made by the director or actors. Write responses to these questions in your journal and share with a partner prior to class discussion. (RL.8.3, RL.8.5, RL.8.6, RL.8.7, SL.8.6)

5. RESEARCH AND INFORMATIVE/EXPLANATORY WRITING

How are playwrights or public speakers similar to and different from other authors? Conduct research about a playwright or public speaker whose work you have read. As you read about his/her life, try to determine the author's purpose for writing the text you read. How is the purpose of the text related to its point of view? Write an informative/explanatory essay in which you explain how point of view is established. Work with classmates to strengthen your writing through planning, revising, and editing your report. Edit your writing for shifts in verb mood and voice. Publish your report about playwrights or public speakers on a class wiki. (RI.8.1, RI.8.2, RI.8.3, RI.8.6, W.8.2, W.8.5, W.8.6, W.8.7, L.8.1, L.8.2, L.8.3, L.8.5a,b,c)

6. LITERARY RESPONSE

Select two political speeches, such as those by Barbara Jordan and Ronald Reagan. Read them closely. How are they similar? How are they different? What perspectives do they bring to their speeches? How

do these speakers inspire listeners? What is important for us to learn from these speeches, and why is it important to continue reading them from generation to generation? Share ideas with a partner and then write your own response in your journal or on the classroom blog. (RL.8.2, RL.8.4, RL.8.5, RL.8.6, SL.8.1)

7. RESPONSE TO LITERARY NONFICTION

Create a T-chart or Venn diagram in your journal where you compare two speeches, such as the “Fireside Chat” by Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Barbara Jordan’s keynote address at the 1976 Democratic National Convention. Delineate each speaker’s arguments and specific claims, evaluate the soundness of the reasoning, and make a judgment about the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence. Point out any particular words that you understand better because of how they were used in context. Write a response to this question in your journal or on the classroom blog: “What is the difference between reading the speech and hearing it/seeing it performed live?” (SL.8.1a,b,c,d; SL.8.3, L.8.5a,b,c; RL.8.5)

8. CLASS DISCUSSION

How is the delivery of spoken messages in plays and speeches similar and different? When would you choose to give a speech? When would you choose to embed a speech (monologue) in a drama? What are the similarities and differences between performing in a play and delivering a speech? Write responses to these questions in your journal or on the classroom blog, citing specific examples and page numbers from the texts read and speeches heard. (RL.8.1, RL.8.5, SL.8.1)

9. DRAMATIZATION/FLUENCY

Choose your favorite selection from *Acolytes: Poems* by Nikki Giovanni or from *The Book of Questions* by Pablo Neruda. Talk with a classmate about the meaning of the poem chosen. Practice reading it, changing the words emphasized and inflection used. Memorize and/or recite the poem for your class, choosing two different interpretations. Be sure you can articulate how the different interpretations change the tone and mood of the poem. Record yourself using a video camera, not only so you can evaluate your performance, but also so you can see the different interpretations for yourself. Use these experiences to help you articulate how different recitations may change the way listeners interpret the poem. (RL.8.2, RL.8.3, SL.8.6)

10. POETRY RESPONSE

Compare and contrast the T. S. Eliot poem “Macavity” to the character of the same name in the Andrew Lloyd Webber musical *Cats*. How are they similar and different? Write a response in your journal, citing specific examples from the poem and musical to justify your thinking. Share links within the classroom blog to performances available online so that your classmates understand your perspective. (RL.8.1, RL.8.6, RL.8.9)

11. WORD STUDY

[Continue this activity from the fourth unit.] Add words found, learned, and used throughout this unit to your personal dictionary (i.e., *dialogue*, *monologue*, *staging*, etc.). This unit will especially focus on vocabulary unique to plays. This dictionary will be used all year long to explore the semantics (meanings) of words and their origins. (L.8.4, L.8.5a,b,c)

12. CLASS DISCUSSION/MEDIA APPRECIATION

How is the plot and use of suspense similar and different between *Sorry, Wrong Number* and *Dial M for Murder*? Write responses to these questions in your journal and share with a partner prior to class or classroom blog discussion. (RL.8.6, SL.8.1a,b,c,d)

13. INFORMATIVE/EXPLANATORY (OR ARGUMENT) WRITING

Reflecting on your experiences reading and performing in this unit, write an informative/explanatory essay in response to the essential question: How is reading a speech, poem, or script for a play different from actually performing dramatically? Write a well-developed paper that includes at least four examples from a poem, speech, or play read. (Alternatively, write an argument in which you explain which you prefer and why. Include examples, as described above.) After your teacher reviews your first draft, work with a partner to edit and strengthen your writing. Edit your writing for shifts in verb mood and voice. Be prepared to record your essay and upload it as a podcast or other multimedia format of choice on the class web page in order to facilitate sharing with your classmates. (W.8.1, W.8.4, W.8.9a,b, SL.8.1, L.8.1, L.8.2, L.8.3, L.8.5)

14. MECHANICS/GRAMMAR WALL

As a class, continue adding to the Mechanics/Grammar bulletin board started in Unit One. Remember—once skills are taught in a mini-lesson and listed on the bulletin board, you are expected to edit your work for these elements before publication. (L.8.1d)

15. VOCABULARY/WORD WALL

As a class, create a Vocabulary Word Wall bulletin board where, throughout the year, you will add and sort words as you learn them in each unit of study. (L.8.4)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- *Grade Eight: A Model Unit for Teaching Drama in Context* (Saskatchewan Education) (RL.8.9)
- *Looking at Plays* (Saskatchewan Education) (RL.8.5)
- *Entering History: Nikki Giovanni and Martin Luther King Jr.* (ReadWriteThink) (SL.8.3)
- *A Playwriting Project for Eighth Grade Theater Students* (Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute)
- *Scribbling Women* (Northeastern University)
- *Story Arts Online* (Heather Forest)
- *Speeches by Famous Women* (FamousQuotes.Me.UK)
- *Famous Presidential Speeches* (FamousQuotes.Me.UK)
- *Classic Movie Scripts* (Aellea.Com)

TERMINOLOGY

Dialogue	Film noir	Screenplay
Diction	Flashback	Script
Drama	Monologue	Staging

Grade Eight, Unit Five Sample Lesson Plan

A Midsummer Night's Dream by William Shakespeare

In this series of ten lessons, students read *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by William Shakespeare, and they:

- Identify the classic structure of the comedy (RL.8.2, RL.8.5, RL.8.9, SL.8.1, SL.8.4, L.8.5)
- Explore the dramatic structure of the comedy (RL.8.3, RL.8.5, RL.8.6, L.8.5, SL.8.1)
- Rehearse and perform select scenes from the comedy (SL.8.6)

Summary

<p>Lessons I–II: A Midsummer Night's Dream</p> <p>Listen to a reading of the comedy (available online at LibriVox) (L.8.3, L.8.5, L.8.6)</p> <p>Identify the characters of the comedy (RL.8.2, SL.8.1, SL.8.4)</p> <p>Create a character map (RL.8.6)</p>	<p>Lessons III–IV: A Dramatic Structure</p> <p>Identify the classic structure of the comedy (RL.8.2, RL.8.5, RL.8.9, SL.8.1, SL.8.4, L.8.5)</p> <p>Examine the three worlds that the comedy depicts (RL.8.3, RL.8.5, RL.8.6, L.8.5, SL.8.1, L.8.6)</p> <p>Note the dramatic structure of the comedy (RL.8.5, L.8.5)</p>
<p>Lessons V–IX: Rehearsing Scenes</p> <p>Identify scenes to perform (SL.8.1b)</p> <p>(In groups) note the setting of the scenes (SL.8.1, RL.8.2)</p> <p>(In groups) explore the dramatic context of the scenes (RL.8.3, RL.8.6, SL.8.1, L.8.5)</p> <p>Assign roles to group members (SL.8.1b)</p> <p>(In groups) identify the dramatic impact of the scene (SL.8.1, RL.8.1, RL.8.3, RL.8.6)</p> <p>(In groups) rehearse the assigned scene (SL.8.6)</p>	<p>Lesson X: Performing Scenes</p> <p>Perform the scenes (SL.8.6)</p> <p>Note the dramatic impact of the performances (SL.8.4)</p> <p>Share impressions (SL.8.1)</p>

Lesson III – IV: A Dramatic Structure

Objectives

- Identify the classic structure of the comedy (RL.8.2, RL.8.5, RL.8.9, SL.8.1, SL.8.4, L.8.5)
- Examine the three worlds that the comedy depicts (RL.8.3, RL.8.5, RL.8.6, L.8.5, SL.8.1, L.8.6)
- Note the dramatic structure of the comedy (RL.8.5, L.8.5)

Required Materials

- ☐ Class set of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by William Shakespeare
- ☐ Class set of "Shakespeare's Plays: Comedy" by Dr. Debora Schwartz, California Polytechnic State University

Procedures

1. Lead-In:
Distribute Schwartz's description of the comedy.
2. Step by Step:
 - a. Students discuss the five parts of the classic comedy that Schwartz identifies:
 1. A situation with tensions or implicit conflict
 2. Implicit conflict is developed
 3. Conflict reaches height; frequently an impasse
 4. Conflict begins to resolve
 5. Problem is resolved; knots are untied
 - b. Students apply the five parts of the classic comedy to the five acts of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. For example, in Act I, the reader learns about the conflict: Hermia, Egeus's daughter, loves Lysander, but her father, who has absolute authority, orders her to marry Demetrius.
 - c. This step is optional, but recommended. Inspired by the critical essay "Midsummer Night's Dream," by D. J. Snider (available on Jstor.com), lead a class discussion about the three "phases or divisions" of the play. Snider refers to the "Real World," represented by the Duke and the laws of Athens; secondly, the "Fairy World" is in the woods outside of Athens; and finally the "Representation in Art" is the "return from the Fairyland to the world of reality." (p. 167)
This type of analysis broadens the earlier discussion. The conflict emerges because Athens has unbending laws that Hermia and Lysander do not accept. Therefore, they move away from the "Real World." In the forest, the laws of Athens do not count. Use a series of prompts, inspired by Snider's essay, that will emphasize the dramatic tension between the two worlds. Such analytical discussion contributes to the understanding of the dramatic structure of the whole play.
3. Closure:
Introduce the next activity — performances of select scenes from the comedy.

Differentiation

Advanced

- Students should conduct online research and find other interpretations of “the classic comedy.” Students should critically evaluate what is found online, based on Schwartz’s work.
- Students will create an online concept map based on the word *comedy*.
- Encourage students to create a modern-day interpretation of a select comedic scene from *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Students must be able to justify how the modern version stays true to the original, while also changing style. Perhaps challenge them to create a movie with “pop-up bubbles” that explain the comedic elements, as defined by Schwartz.
- Give students an opportunity to bookmark helpful websites for other classmates to learn more about Shakespeare and the history behind the writing of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Collect the websites on a web portal.

Struggling

- Provide students with a handout on which they can graphically (non-linguistically) interpret the five parts of the classic comedy, as presented by Schwartz, and how they relate to each other.
- Encourage students to mark the five elements of the comedy in their text with sticky notes. First, students should try this on their own before participating in a guided group discussion. Alternatively, divide the students into groups; they can work with partners to find one element together to mark. Students share their findings with the group.
- If students need assistance understanding what they are reading, they can watch select scenes on DVD or a handheld device and read along. Seeing Shakespeare’s plays performed often aids in comprehension of the text.

Homework/Assessment

Begin to explore scenes for performance.

“The Road Not Taken”

This final six-week unit of eighth grade encourages students to explore their strengths by reading about strong characters who ventured against conventional wisdom in search of the greater good.



OVERVIEW

The stage is set by Robert Frost’s poem “The Road Not Taken.” Although students read from classic and contemporary literature, writing and class discussions focus on how literature helps us define the tension between the needs of the individual and the greater good of society. The goal of this unit is for students not only to apply the reading, writing, speaking, and listening strategies and skills they have learned up to this point in the year, but also to analyze how authors use allegory, symbolism, and satire to affect the reader. Students will revisit “The Road Not Taken” as the unit concludes, in order to see how this unit led to deeper understanding of the poem. This unit ends with an essay in response to the essential question. (The essay is followed with a choice for students: write their own narrative or create their own multimedia presentation that demonstrates what they learned this year.)

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

Can literature help us to define the greater good?

FOCUS STANDARDS

These Focus Standards have been selected for the unit from the Common Core State Standards.

RL.8.7: Analyze the extent to which a filmed or live production of a story or drama stays faithful to or departs from the text or script, evaluating the choices made by the director or actors.

W.8.3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.

SL.8.4: Present claims and findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with relevant evidence, sound valid reasoning, and well-chosen details; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.

L.8.3: Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.

L.8.3(a): Use verbs in the active and passive voice and in the conditional and subjunctive mood to achieve particular effects (e.g., emphasizing the actor or the action; expressing uncertainty or describing a state contrary to fact).

SUGGESTED STUDENT OBJECTIVES

- Read and discuss a variety of novels that reveal, explicitly or implicitly, “the greater good.”
- Experiment with performing poetry in variety of styles and discuss how these changes affect its interpretation.
- Compare and contrast characters, plots, themes, settings, and literary techniques used in the stories read.
- Analyze how particular lines of dialogue in literature propel the action and reveal aspects of a character.
- Analyze how writing styles and literary techniques, such as symbolism or satire, are used and how their use affects meaning and reader engagement.
- Write a variety of responses to literature and informational text.
- Analyze the extent to which a filmed version of a story stays faithful to or departs from the text, evaluating the choices made by the director or actors.
- Create a multimedia presentation on “the greater good,” where the message is either explicitly stated or implied.

SUGGESTED WORKS

(E) indicates a CCSS exemplar text; (EA) indicates a text from a writer with other works identified as exemplars.

LITERARY TEXTS

Stories

- *Little Women* (Louisa May Alcott) (E)
- *I, Juan de Pareja* (Elizabeth Borton de Trevino)
- *Lord of the Flies* (William Golding)
- *The Old Man and the Sea* (Ernest Hemingway)
- *Gulliver’s Travels* (Jonathan Swift)
- *The Sea-Wolf* (Oxford World’s Classics Edition) (Jack London)
- *Rebecca* (Daphne du Maurier)
- *American Dragons: Twenty-Five Asian American Voices* (Laurence Yep) (EA)
- *The Color of My Words* (Lynn Joseph)
- *Children of the River* (Linda Crew)
- *Amos Fortune, Free Man* (Elizabeth Yates)
- *The Outsiders* (S. E. Hinton)
- *Stargirl* (Jerry Spinelli)

Poetry

- “The Road Not Taken” (Robert Frost) (E)
- “Nothing Gold Can Stay” (Robert Frost) (E)
- *Things I Have to Tell You: Poems and Writing by Teenage Girls* (Betsy Franco)
- *Night Is Gone, Day Is Still Coming: Stories and Poems by American Indian Teens and Young Adults* (Annette Piña Ochoa, Betsy Franco, and Traci L. Gourdine)

INFORMATIONAL TEXTS

Nonfiction

- “Trek 7, The Fractal Pond Race” (from *Math Trek: Adventures in the Math Zone*) (Ivars Peterson and Nancy Henderson) (E)

Literary Criticism

- “Robert Frost, Poet of Action” (James McBride Dabbs)

ART, MUSIC, AND MEDIA

Art

- Diego Velázquez, *Juan de Pareja* (1650)
- Artemisia Gentileschi, *Self-Portrait as the Allegory of Painting* (1638–1639)

Film

- Mervyn LeRoy, dir., *Little Women* (1949)
- Gillian Armstrong, dir., *Little Women* (1994)
- John Sturges, dir., *The Old Man and the Sea* (1958)
- Jud Taylor, dir., *The Old Man and the Sea* (1990)
- Charles Sturridge, dir., *Gulliver’s Travels* (1996)
- Michael Curtiz, dir., *The Sea Wolf* (1941)

SAMPLE ACTIVITIES AND ASSESSMENTS

1. INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY

Read “The Road Not Taken” by Robert Frost. Talk with a classmate about what you think the poem means, both literally and figuratively. Write your ideas down in your journal or on a spreadsheet. We will revisit this poem at the end of the unit to see if our thoughts and ideas have changed. (RL.8.2, RL.8.4, SL.8.5)

2. LITERARY GRAPHIC ORGANIZER

As you read the novels (and view the films) in this unit, take notes in your journal or on a spreadsheet about particular lines of dialogue or incidents that propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or suggest the greater good. Be sure to note page numbers with relevant information so you can cite the text during class discussion.

- What is the setting of the novel?
- Who are the major and minor characters?

- What problems or challenges does(do) the character(s) face? How does he/she overcome these challenges?
- Which lines of dialogue or events are pivotal to the novel? Why?
- What elements were changed between the novel and the film version?
- What traditional, mythical, or Biblical references are made in the novel?
- What elements of the greater good are revealed, implicitly or explicitly, in the novel?

Prior to class discussion, your teacher may give you the opportunity to share your notes with a partner who read the same text. (RL.8.1, RL.8.2, RL.8.3, RL.8.7, RL.8.9, RL.8.10)

3. CLASS DISCUSSION

Compare and contrast settings, themes, and characters, and how these story elements help us to define the greater good. Evaluate the claims made by your classmates and evaluate the soundness of reasoning they use in discussion. Can you begin to make any generalizations about what is the greater good? Your teacher may encourage you to continue the class discussion on the classroom blog throughout the course of this unit. (SL.8.1, SL.8.3, RL.8.9)

4. INFORMATIONAL TEXT RESPONSE

After reading “Trek 7, The Fractal Pond Race” from *Math Trek: Adventures in the Math Zone* by Ivars Peterson and Nancy Henderson, respond to the following question in your journal: How did Benoit Mandelbrot follow “The Road Not Taken” in his approach to fractals? What can we learn from him? Post your response on the classroom blog to encourage conversation among your classmates. (RI.8.1, RI.8.6, RI.8.8, RI.8.10, W.8.4, W.8.9b, L.8.1, L.8.2, L.8.3, L.8.5)

5. LITERARY RESPONSE/CLASS DISCUSSION

After reading *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott:

- Discuss the role of the setting in *Little Women*. Why does Alcott put such an important historical event into the background of her story?
- Why does Alcott alternate between stories about each of the four March sisters throughout *Little Women*? Why is this literary technique effective?

Write responses to these questions in your journal or on the classroom blog and share with a partner prior to class discussion. (SL.8.1, RL.8.2, RL.8.4, RL.8.6, RL.8.10)

6. INFORMATIVE/EXPLANATORY WRITING AND PRESENTATION

Compare the societal discriminations that the Logan family experienced in *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* by Mildred Taylor (read in Unit Two) to the gender discrimination described in *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott. How are the characters’ experiences similar yet different? Write a well-developed speech that includes an engaging opening statement describing your position and at least three examples cited from the texts. Edit your writing for the grammar conventions studied this year. Present your speech to the class and record it using a video camera so you can evaluate your performance. (RL.8.1, RL.8.2, RL.8.3, RL.8.10, W.8.1, W.8.4, L.8.1, L.8.2, L.8.3, L.8.5)

7. ART/LITERARY RESPONSE

How does the writing style (from the first-person point of view) in *I, Juan de Pareja* by Elizabeth Borton de Trevino affect your connection to the protagonist, de Pareja? How is de Pareja’s struggle to paint (because Spanish slaves at the time were forbidden to practice the arts) simultaneously

fascinating, suspenseful, and inspiring? View Diego Velázquez’s portrait of Juan de Pareja. How does looking at this painting expand your knowledge of its subject? Write responses to these questions and other self-generated questions in your journal. (RL.8.2, RL.8.3, RL.8.6, RL.8.10, W.8.9a)

8. ART/CLASS DISCUSSION

Velázquez painted his assistant, Juan de Pareja, who was also a painter. Velázquez is believed to have painted de Pareja in preparation for a portrait he was soon to paint of Pope Innocent X. Does this strike you as a mere preparatory work? Has Velázquez given de Pareja an assistant’s bearing or a more regal one? (SL.8.1, SL.8.2, SL.8.4, SL.8.5)

9. ART/CLASS DISCUSSION

Gentileschi was the first female artist to be admitted to the prestigious Accademia delle Arti del Disegno in Florence, Italy, yet she struggled to break into the art world. Compare Gentileschi’s self-portrait to Velázquez’s portrayal of de Pareja. How are the portraits depicted? What artistic elements engage the viewer? Note that the paintings are nearly contemporaneous. How do the works compare? (SL.8.1, SL.8.2, SL.8.4, SL.8.5)

10. INFORMATIVE/EXPLANATORY WRITING

Compare the allegorical nature of *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding to Ernest Hemingway’s *The Old Man and the Sea* in your journal. What important symbols are used in each novel? How is the use of symbolism integral to these novels? Begin by outlining your ideas using a Venn diagram in your journal or using an online template. Write an informative/explanatory essay comparing and contrasting the similarities and differences in these novels, citing specific page numbers for explicit and implicit text references. Share your essay with a partner, and discuss as a class. Your teacher may ask you to upload your essay to the classroom blog in order to encourage an electronic conversation with your classmates. (W.8.2, W.8.4, SL.8.1, RL.8.4, RL.8.5, RL.8.9)

11. LITERARY RESPONSE

Respond to the following questions in your journal or on a spreadsheet:

- How does Swift use language to express satire in *Gulliver’s Travels*?
- How does Swift’s writing style change as the story evolves?
- How do the characters’ physical characteristics reflect their inner feelings?
- How does *Gulliver’s Travels* explore the idea of utopia?
- How is the idea of utopia related to “the greater good”? (RL.8.4, RL.8.6, RL.8.9, W.8.4, W.8.9a, L.8.5a,b,c)

12. LITERARY RESPONSE

Compare the characters of Hump and Larsen from *The Sea-Wolf* by Jack London. How do their perspectives on life differ? Are there any similarities between the two characters? Write your responses to these questions in your journal. (RL.8.1, RL.8.3, RL.8.6, RL.8.10)

13. LITERARY RESPONSE

In your journal, respond to the following prompts about *Rebecca* by Daphne du Maurier:

- What effect does the nameless heroine have on how we read the novel? What does this anonymity symbolize?

- What is the role of Manderley in the novel? How does setting contribute to the plot? To the tone? To the suspenseful nature?
- What would be “the greater good” learned from *Rebecca*? (RL.8.2, RL.8.4, RL.8.6)

14. DRAMATIZATION/CLASS DISCUSSION

Read one of the novels from this unit. Then view select scenes from the film version and compare them to the scenes as written. Analyze the extent to which a filmed or live production of a story or drama stays faithful to or departs from the text, evaluating the choices made by the director or actors. Write responses to these questions in your journal and share with a partner prior to class discussion. (RL.8.5, RL.8.7, SL.8.6)

15. CLASS DISCUSSION AND RECITATION

Re-read the first poem read in this unit, “The Road Not Taken.” After this unit of study, describe how your understanding of this poem has changed. What new insights have you gained? After class discussion, practice reading the poem aloud, emphasizing different words. How does changing emphasis change the meaning? Highlight the words and phrases you want to emphasize. Memorize and recite it for your class. How is your interpretation similar to and different from others? (RL.8.2, RL.8.4, SL.8.6)

16. WRITING (NARRATIVE AND ARGUMENT) AND MULTIMEDIA PRESENTATION

Reflecting on your experiences reading novels and viewing related films in this unit, as well as literature read all year, write an argument in response to the essential question: Can literature help us to define the greater good? Include at least three examples from texts to support your position, explaining why they help define “the greater good.” You may also choose to write a narrative that reveals your definition of the greater good or develop a multimedia presentation in which your definition is revealed and explained. In your narrative or presentation, include references to specific examples of what you learned from novels read and films viewed about characters, the effect of settings, and pivotal lines of dialogue. Incorporate a variety of words learned this year. Edit your writing for the grammar conventions studied this year. Publish your essay, story, or multimedia presentation as your culminating project for eighth grade. (W.8.3, W.8.5, W.8.6, W.8.8, W.8.9a,b, W.8.10, SL.8.4, SL.8.5, L.8.1, L.8.2, L.8.3, L.8.5, L.8.6)

17. MECHANICS/GRAMMAR WALL

As a class, continue adding to the Mechanics/Grammar bulletin board started in Unit One. Remember—once skills are taught in a mini-lesson and listed on the bulletin board, you are expected to edit your work for these elements before publication. (L.8.1, L.8.2, L.8.3)

18. VOCABULARY/WORD WALL

As a class, create a Vocabulary Word Wall bulletin board where, throughout the year, you will add and sort words as they are learned within each unit of study. (L.8.4)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- *Learning the Lines* (My Favorite Poem Project, Boston University) (RL.8.5)
- *Louisa May Alcott was Born in 1832* (ReadWriteThink) (This unit is geared toward grades 9–12, but may be adapted.) (W.8.3)
- *From Dr. Seuss to Jonathan Swift: Exploring the History behind the Satire* (ReadWriteThink) (This is a unit for grades 9–12, but may be adapted.) (RL.8.6)

- *Blogtopia: Blogging About Your Own Utopia* (ReadWriteThink) (This is a unit for grades 9–12, but may be adapted.) (W.8.6)
- Full Texts of Classic Literature (SparkNotes)
- Lesson Plans: Robert Frost’s “The Road Not Taken” (Bright Hub)
- *Lord of the Flies* lesson plans (Discovery Channel, Discovery Education Lesson Plans Library)
- *Understanding The Old Man and the Sea: A Student Casebook to Issues, Sources, and Historical Documents* (Patricia Dunlavy Valenti)
- Robert Frost Reads “The Road Not Taken”

TERMINOLOGY

Allegory

Hero/heroine

Satirey

Strength of character

Symbolism

Style

Grade Eight, Unit Six Sample Lesson Plan

“The Road Not Taken” by Robert Frost

In this series of two lessons, students read “The Road Not Taken” by Robert Frost, and they:

- Examine the speaker’s message in “The Road Not Taken” (RL.8.1, RL.8.2, SL.8.1, L.8.3)
- Explore the challenge of interpreting “The Road Not Taken” (RL.8.1, RL.8.2, RL.8.4, W.8.2a, W.2b,d,e; SL.8.1)

Summary

Lesson I: Reading “The Road Not Taken” by Robert Frost Examine the form of “The Road Not Taken” (RL.8.1, SL.8.1, L.8.3) Identify the rhyming scheme (RL.8.1, SL.8.1) Note the rhyming scheme’s influence on the reader (RL.8.1, SL.8.1, L.8.3) Visualize the poem’s setting (RL.8.1) Explore the speaker’s situation and decision (RL.8.1, SL.8.1)	Lesson II: The Challenge of Interpreting “The Road Not Taken” Explore James McBride Dabbs’s claim that Robert Frost is “a poet of action” (RL.8.1, RL.8.4, SL.8.1) Revisit the speaker’s decision (RL.8.1, RL.8.2, SL.8.1) Discuss the implication of the contrast between lines 10/11 and line 19 (RL.8.1, RL.8.2, SL.8.1, L.8.3) Examine the speaker’s point of view in the final stanza (RL.8.1, RL.8.2, SL.8.1) Investigate the challenge of interpreting “The Road Not Taken” (RL.8.1, RL.8.2, W.8.2a, W.2b,d,e; SL.8.1)
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Lesson II: The Challenge of Interpreting “The Road Not Taken”

Objectives

- Explore James McBride Dabbs’s claim that Robert Frost is “a poet of action” (RL.8.1, RL.8.4, SL.8.1)
- Revisit the speaker’s decision (RL.8.1, RL.8.2, SL.8.1)
- Discuss the implication of the contrast between lines 10/11 and line 19 (RL.8.1, RL.8.2, SL.8.1, L.8.3)
- Examine the speaker’s point of view in the final stanza (RL.8.1, RL.8.2, SL.8.1)
- Investigate the challenge of interpreting “The Road Not Taken” (RL.8.1, RL.8.2, W.8.2a, W.2b,d,e; SL.8.1)

Required Materials

- ☐ Copies of “The Road Not Taken,” by Robert Frost
- ☐ Excerpts from James McBride Dabbs’s essay, “Robert Frost, Poet of Action”

Procedures

1. Lead-In:

Students read excerpts from Dabbs’s essay:

At his best in his lyrics, Robert Frost, in my opinion, will be remembered because he is, even there, a poet of action. These will endure as finished pictures of things done. They have the classic completeness of actions planned, executed, understood. And they reveal modern man, complete in his incompleteness. . . . Well, what is life? I am willing to take my stand with Aristotle—though perhaps I extend somewhat his meaning—that “life consists in an action”; not in mere physical movement with its sensuous accompaniment, but in the expression in time and space of the spirit of a man. Robert Frost, I think, expresses life so conceived.

James McBride Dabbs, “Robert Frost, Poet of Action,” *The English Journal*, Vol. 25, No. 6 (1936): 443–451.

2. Step by Step:

- a. Tell the students to read quietly the excerpts from Dabbs’s essay.
 - b. In the context of “The Road Not Taken,” students discuss the idea that Robert Frost is “a poet of action.”
 - c. Probe the speaker’s decision.
 - d. Discuss the contrast between lines 10/11 and line 19.
 - Were the roads the same?
 - Is the speaker’s decision random or deliberate?
 - What is the effect of this discussion on the claim that Frost was “a poet of action”?
 - e. Students explore the challenge of interpreting “The Road Not Taken.”
3. Closure:
Reread the poem.

Differentiation

Advanced

- Students will explore the phrase “a poet of action” on a cube (i.e., by finding other examples of poets who could be described in a similar manner and representing them/their work on the faces of the cube).
- Encourage students to read the poem with a variety of dramatic interpretations and choose the most unique to present to other students. Students should evaluate the different interpretations and discuss how they work to enhance the poem, or detract from it. These readings may be recorded with a video camera to share with other students as time permits.

- Encourage students to create a modern-day interpretation of the poem. They must be able to justify how the modern version stays true to the original while also changing style. Perhaps challenge them to create a movie or digital slide show.
- Encourage students to find other poems and references inspired by “The Road Not Taken.” Students should be able to explain how the reference is made. Alternatively, students can read other early poems by Robert Frost and compare and contrast their meaning and style to the one studied in this lesson.

Struggling:

- Reread the poem to students, or allow them to listen to a pre-recorded version.
- Students will discuss the Dabbs excerpt with a partner or in a small group with the teacher.
- Students will explore the phrase “a poet of action” on a cube in order to make this abstract concept more concrete (i.e., describe it, contrast it with “poet,” associate it with a “finished picture,” apply it to a poet’s work, analyze the words — root words/origin, argue for or against it).
- Students create a T-chart or Venn diagram that contrasts the differences between lines 10/11 and line 19.
- Record the student volunteer who reads the poem using a video camera so students can (1) review it as needed, and (2) practice reading along to aid in fluency and understanding.
- Provide the students with a graphic organizer on which they can draft the elements of the homework in a small group or with a partner prior to finishing it at home. Alternatively, have them write their ideas on index cards and then organize them to use at home.
- Contrast two ways of reading the poem — reading where you pause at the end of each line and where you simply honor the punctuation. Discuss how this nuance changes the interpretation or meaning.

Homework/Assessment

Compose a well-organized and brief essay in which you discuss the challenge of interpreting Robert Frost’s “The Road Not Taken.”

Writing Guidelines

- Clearly establish the topic of the essay and contextualize it.
- Organize the sequence of ideas according to the purpose of the paragraph.
- Cite the text using short quotations.
- Use Standard English form.
- Avoid grammatical and mechanical errors.
- Use present simple tense.