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Integrating Comprehension Instruction Within the Middle School ELA Curriculum

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Chapter One: Introduction

Problem Statement

The push for a more rigorous reading curriculum due to the implementation of the Common Core State Standards has put high demands on student ability to successfully work with difficult pieces of literature, therefore, comprehension instruction is a necessary focus that needs to exist in ELA classrooms in order to provide students appropriate tools to be able to understand and analyze a variety of texts.

Why is it necessary to teach students comprehension strategies? How should teachers go about presenting these tools and encouraging students to apply them independently? What is the ultimate goal of comprehension instruction? Should this task be the responsibility of the ELA teachers only? These are all fundamental questions that surround the topic of reading comprehension instruction.

Including reading comprehension in the annual unit plans is a difficult assignment. Oftentimes teachers have a difficult time finding room in their curriculum for incorporating these additional lessons since the standards already demand so much time that must be dedicated to other topics. But what is the benefit of making time to teach novels, poetry, short-stories, nonfiction, if the students are not able to fully comprehend and analyze these pieces of literature without constant teacher guidance? Once the students leave that classroom for the year, what skills are they taking with them to apply in future courses? Reading comprehension is not applicable in ELA classrooms only, it’s a skill that students require across the curriculum – whether they’re solving word problems in Math, reading about cell
structure in Science class, or learning about the Industrial Revolution in Social Studies. And it’s a skill that they will use every single day once they've graduated school, at this point without even realizing the complex cognitive functioning that is automatically occurring as they acquire new information. Therefore, if reading comprehension is not a skill they master before graduation, they are entering the world unprepared.

In the classroom reading comprehension struggles might include “failure to recall the main points of a story, failure to answer literal and/or inferential questions, failure to complete the actual reading of the text” (Kendeou, 11). In an attempt to complete the required reading, students can become frustrated when they're not able to comprehend the material. Yu discusses these personal observations – “frequently the students complain that they spend quite a long time reading, but they could not understand what it is about; other problems are also happening: they forget what they just finished reading; the material is not hard but they cannot find the answers to the questions” (Yu, 135). If not addressed early, children can lose motivation and interest when it comes to reading in general, not just for school assignments.

The Common Core has made a drastic impact on classrooms across the nation ranging from kindergarten to twelfth grade. The purpose behind the initiative was to "align diverse state curricula, improve educational outcomes, prepare students for college and careers, foster development and implementation of rigorous academic content, and ensure high-quality teaching practices grounded in content and pedagogical knowledge and skill" (Thomas, 177). Paige Jaeger explains
the intentions of the Common Core, and that “too many of our graduates are not college-and-career ready...fewer college freshmen are finishing degrees and are, instead, dropping out of college. It is the intention of the drafters of the CCSS that students’ skills and knowledge acquired in grades K-12 will result in a huge reduction in the number of students who need remediation when they arrive at college” (Jaeger, 56).

The CCSS are being presented as the save-all solution for our education system, but in reality it's a combination of a few new strategies, along with a few tried ones. For example, “close reading became one of its [Common Core's] most contested aspects and has since fractured the educational field between those who believe strongly in its ability to support and empower students when they are confronted with complex text and those who argue that it is unrealistic and counterproductive not to provide more structured teacher support” (Sisson, 8). Yet, close reading as defined by the CCSS strongly resemble the “New Criticism” approach which dates back to the 1930s and was the preferred method for teaching literature. It was believed that “a reader could best understand a text by excluding any personal response – and instead rely on reading the text carefully and purposefully” (Sisson, 11). Much like with the ELA standards under the Common Core, the emphasis was put on the text; text is central to meaning, and that meaning is waiting to be discovered by the reader through close reading.

But over time, popularity of this technique weakened and in the 1970’s “as attention shifted from teacher-directed instruction to student-centered classrooms” the Reader Response Theory entered into the classrooms incorporating “reader
connections, predictions, visualizations, reader response essays, and writing journal as means for students to construct distinct, individual meanings of what they read” (Sisson, 11). After a short few decades, the Reader Response Theory has been rejected and the CCSS “reintroduced the concepts inherent to New Criticism, especially the use of close reading” (Sisson, 11).

ELA teachers now encourage annotating while reading and textual analysis in order to dissect the meaning of the text. And while comprehension strategies are included in the Common Core State Standards, they are “delineated as outcome measures: After reading, the student will be able to [summarize, infer, ask and answer questions, etc.]...teachers focus on comprehension strategies as final products, rather than presenting them as tools for constructing meaning” (Hollenbeck, 564). While reading comprehension strategies can be a great tool, especially for younger readers who might be struggling with fluency or vocabulary acquisition, they should not be taught in isolation. In many classrooms “students are too frequently taught to employ strategies without discussion of their purpose. Therefore, students may view a comprehension strategy as an end in itself – write a summary, draw a picture – rather than as a tool for independent meaning construction (Hollenbeck, 560).

Students are spending less time reading novels and discussing character development and more time reading challenging nonfiction and analyzing the structure of the written piece. With the emphasis on incorporating difficult texts teachers are struggling to have students comprehend such challenging, nonfiction reading material. Aligning with the requirements of the Common Core State
Standards, demonstrating the use comprehension strategies is expected of many students, but “if a student does not see the value of comprehension strategies, or believes he or she cannot be successful in their use, then he or she is unlikely to read in a strategic manner” (Hollenbeck, 563), which is why a different approach must be taken when implementing comprehension instruction. In studies done comparing comprehension instruction, findings concluded that “strategies rather than drill were most effective in improving reading comprehension...teaching students to acquire and use strategies may require altering traditional approaches to strategy instruction” (Wolff, 26).

**Significance of the Problem**

At the elementary level fluency is a stronger central focus than reading comprehension, but by the time students enter middle school they are “expected to be able to know how to gain a base level comprehension of a text (comprehension surface structure) on their own” (DiCicco, 37). But “many of our middle school students struggle with reading because they have relied on visual supports elementary reading instruction has provided...these supports no longer exist in middle school” (DiCicco, 37). Without appropriate comprehension strategies it’s no surprise kids are unsuccessful in understanding and analyzing the new types of texts presented, especially nonfiction.

Whenever a school is labeled “low-performing” often a strong connection to poor literacy exists. Data is available showing “national measures of student achievement in reading – particularly in the area of nonfiction texts – suggest that achievement gaps persist” (Wolff, 24). Researchers state that this very well may be
due to the fact that “struggling readers find comprehending nonfiction text especially challenging due to the specialized vocabulary and the new concepts presented” (Wolff, 26). Specifically looking at middle school grade levels, “as recently as 2011, 66% of eight grade students scored below the proficiency level of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading assessment” (Wolff, 24). The implementation of the Common Core State Standards makes the situation even more daunting. Regarding the reading standards, it’s stated that “one of the key requirements of the Common Core State Standards for Reading is that all students must be able to comprehend texts of steadily increasing complexity as they progress through school” (http://www.corestandards.org/assets/Appendix_A.pdf).

This is demonstrated in the change in lexile ranges for a variety of grade levels.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text Complexity Grade Band in the Standards</th>
<th>Old Lexile Ranges</th>
<th>Lexile Ranges Aligned to CCR expectations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K-1</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>450-725</td>
<td>450-790</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-5</td>
<td>645-845</td>
<td>770-980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-8</td>
<td>860-1010</td>
<td>955-1155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-10</td>
<td>960-1115</td>
<td>1080-1305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-CCR</td>
<td>1070-1220</td>
<td>1215-1355</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Therefore, if students were already struggling with reading comprehension, as evident by nation wide test results, to meet these new rigorous standards incorporating comprehension instruction is crucial.

Even with all this data present, many teachers are hesitant to engage in comprehension instruction. Wolff clarifies that “although there have been major breakthroughs in research on most effective ways to teach comprehension, many
teachers, especially in the intermediate and upper grades, continue to lack the training and/or resources, to implement these techniques” (Wolf, 23). Nanda Klapwijk digs deeper into the issue and outlines four main reasons as to why comprehension instruction is not present in many classrooms. The first reason she believes is “a lack of proper teacher education.” (Klapwijk, 2). Now, she is not necessarily saying that teacher preparation programs are doing an insufficient job, but that they tend to focus on “reading instruction” and that there is a “distinct lack of research into and professional development of teachers in terms of reading comprehension instruction” (Klapwijk, 2). The second reason is the fact that “becoming a comprehension strategies instruction teacher is painfully difficult and time consuming” (Klapwijk, 2). If future teachers are not spending time in preparatory programs learning about reading comprehension instruction, it makes it that much more difficult to incorporate it into their lessons independently down the road. Her third reason, however, states that even if the first two factors are not an issue, teachers may still choose to not partake in comprehension instruction because they are “unconvinced about the effect of strategy instruction on their learners’ progress” (Klapwijk, 2). Assessing reading comprehension, which will be discussed in more detail in chapter 2, is a difficult task and one that doesn’t always present clear results. This can become an obstacle for educators who “prefer to receive physical evidence of the effect of an intervention or method on their learners’ results” (Klapwijk, 3). Lastly, she explains that traditionally “the teaching of any skills related to language (listening, speaking, reading and writing) was allocated to the so-called language teacher and restricted to the so-called language
classroom” (Klapwijk, 3). In the beginning I posed the question – should comprehension instruction be only the ELA teacher’s responsibility? An answer was suggested, that no, since comprehension is a skill necessary in multiple content areas, “comprehension instruction must form part of every teacher’s skill set and be taken into every class in school every day” (Klapwijk, 3). But since many teachers might still hold true this traditional belief that Klapwijk mentions, it’s even more critical that ELA teachers foster an environment that includes comprehension instruction as a part of the curriculum.

**Purpose**

Implementing comprehension instruction is needed now more than ever before as students are expected to look beyond the literal meaning of a text, when even the literal meaning is difficult to understand due to text complexity. Comprehension strategies should not be a separate unit, otherwise they can be perceived by students as a portion of instruction to get through that year. Instead, they can be introduced or presented in a form of a lesson, but constantly be referred to during a literature unit, whether it be a novel, a poem, a short story, or a nonfiction text. Students should view these strategies as tools, not something they must memorize or pretend to use because it’s required. A variety of reflective practices can assist with this process and encourage students to attempt to use them independently. In essence, “comprehension strategy instruction should provide students the awareness of when strategy application is necessary, as well as the knowledge to independently apply strategies to make sense of complex texts” (Hollenbeck, 561).
In order for students to come even close to considering using a reading comprehension strategy, teachers should instead present a selection of different strategies students can use throughout the year, and “model strategy use as a flexible and dynamic way to problem solve while reading. Students therefore learn to view strategies as tools to assists with meaning construction, rather than rigid tasks that are completed at the teacher’s request” (Hollenbeck, 560). Teachers can still explain that a demonstration of a strategy used must be present, but giving the students a choice of what strategy to use might seem less forceful.

The intention behind comprehension instruction is to make students aware of the intricacy behind the written word and provide them with appropriate tools to make sense of it. By paying attention to the variety of text structures that are employed by writers and understanding the author’s purpose in writing a specific piece of literature, students can begin to view the text from the author’s point of view, and in the meantime develop a deeper perspective of its meaning and significance. But in order to do this independently and eventually automatically, students have to be taught strategies to use independently. These comprehension strategies are what will lead them to understand all the components that make up a written passage or article, and how these components contribute to the texts meaning.

But before students are able to get to this sophisticated way of thinking and analyzing, they need to start at the root, literally. Understanding the literal meaning of a text is the first step, so teachers need to address strategies that assist the accomplishment of this skill. Teaching prefixes, suffixes, root words, with posters
around the room as reminders will guide students to decipher those unknown vocabulary words. Paying attention to context clues, and actually knowing what different types of context clues authors employ, can also assist with attempting to understand a word’s meaning. Once students are able to get beyond challenging vocabulary, which can be a barrier in understanding the basic meaning, they can progress to seeking the deeper meaning, the figurative meaning of the text. Students then can successfully use those pre-reading, during reading, and post-reading strategies that will promote strong and precise comprehension of a particular text.

**Rationale**

The literacy expectations for our students are high and teachers have to consciously provide appropriate tools to help students be successful in this area. Since many teachers within other contents might not understand the importance of comprehension instruction or feel inadequate in teaching lessons relating to language, ELA teachers need to make room for it in their curriculum.

The Common Core State Standards are aiming to better prepare students for college by exposing students to difficult texts in earlier grades. Teachers can better prepare students for college by demonstrating to them that they can be in charge of their own learning by teaching them these strategies, these tools, to turn to when a piece of literature is unclear and confusing.
Definition of Terms

**Reading Comprehension:** the ability to read a text, process it and understand its meaning, literal and figurative.

**Comprehension Instruction:** instruction that helps students to become independent and metacognitive readers who are able to use a variety of comprehension strategies to ensure that they understand what they read.

**Reading Comprehension Strategies:** assist readers in comprehending and thinking about the text, and enable readers to tackle challenging texts with greater independence.

**Common Core State Standards:** educational criteria in the United States that details what K–12 students should know in English Language Arts and Mathematics at the end of each grade.

**Fluency:** the ability to read a text accurately, quickly, and with expression.

**Author’s Purpose:** reason for or intent in writing. An author's purpose may be to amuse the reader, to persuade the reader, to inform the reader, or to satirize a condition.
Chapter 2: Review of Literature

Reading Comprehension

Most theories define comprehension as “some type of understanding and making inferences from text” (Hosp, 62) in the most general sense. However, through research experts were able to reveal that reading comprehension is a complex concept, and that “a variety of elements influence comprehension, from internal cognitive-based factors (such as memory and attention), to characteristics of the text (such as the complexity of sentence structure and the density of new concepts and vocabulary). The purpose of reading likewise has an impact on comprehension...All these elements – reader, text, and purpose – interact with the unique sociocultural context in which reading occurs” (Hollenbeck, 559). Prior to this finding, it was thought that “meaning resided in text, waiting to be excavated by the reader” (Hollenbeck, 559). When we read, we use “a variety of cognitive strategies to support knowledge acquisition, such as rehearsal, mental images, and mnemonics” (Hollenbeck, 559). In fact, some expert readers may not even be aware of the decoding that’s occurring as they read. But many researchers argue that “the functional use of these skills should be the main focus of education” and that reading comprehension correlates with “academic achievement, reading amount, reading attitude, reading motivation and reading habit” (Bastug, 281). Reading comprehension becomes especially crucial in higher grade levels. This is the time when “students encounter more reading content and acquire more background” (Bastug, 282). However, reading comprehension is not only affected by the difficulty
level of text, which increases with grade level, but by the types of text as well. If dividing text into two categories, informative and narrative, “narrative texts mostly involve elements such as characters, problems and environments within a context, informative texts involve structure of explanation, enumeration, cause-effect, comparison, contrast and problem-solving for the purpose of informing” (Bastug, 282). It’s no surprise then that research shows “reading and comprehending narrative texts is easier” (Bastug, 282). Informational text is more difficult to comprehend than narrative text, because “unlike the entertaining nature of narrative text, informational text’s primary purpose is to convey information thus making it less engaging for a reader” (McCown, 238). Since the implementation of the Common Core State Standards, there has been “a gradual shift from 50% informational text in fourth grade to 70% informational text in twelfth grade” (McCown, 237). With the Common Core pushing for a rigorous implementation of informational texts at the middle and secondary levels, where the text type is already more demanding, focusing on teaching reading comprehension is more important than ever before to ensure students are successfully able to read and analyze these challenging texts. Graves states that “age-appropriate literacy instruction for adolescents includes many components – continuing instruction in vocabulary, a rich writing program, reading in a range of fiction and nonfiction materials, and instruction in a variety of study strategies. Most important, however, it includes a rich comprehension program” (Graves, 36). According to Graves and Liang, comprehension instruction should include at least these four facets:

- Fostering learning from text
Comprehension instruction is an essential part of a literacy curriculum and should be given great consideration when planning use of time in a classroom, especially in a middle school setting. However, reading comprehension is a complex phenomenon, therefore before including comprehension instruction within a year-long curriculum, teachers should be aware of the many factors that influence or play a role in comprehension in order to design the appropriate lessons for their classroom.

**Fluency**

There are five factors associated with reading – phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and lastly comprehension” (Hosp, 61). In order for a student to successfully comprehend reading material, they must be a fluent reader.
Years of research have found “significant relationships linking reading fluency to comprehension” (Paige, 86). Fluency is defined as “accurate and automatic word reading. A student being fluent with word reading has been argued as vital to skilled reading because rather than having to expend cognitive effort on the mechanics of accessing the text, the reader can focus his or her resources on constructing meaning from text and relating it to his or her corpus of prior knowledge” (Hosp, 62). Paige explains that “far too often middle and secondary students fall short of their academic potential because their poor reading skills do not allow them sufficient access to the course content” (Paige, 84). Three characteristics – “word identification accuracy, pacing, and prosody” – define reading fluency” (Paige, 84). At some point in the first few years of school, “since students at younger ages/lower grade levels are more focused on fundamental reading skills such as letter and word identification,” students are assessed on their fluency. Usually a WCPM test appropriate for that grade level is used to measure how many words the students can read with ease while making few mistakes. If intervention is necessary they work with a Reading Specialist, since the understanding is that fluency might be playing a role as a barrier preventing reading comprehension. Paige explains a few strategies to encourage fluent reading in the general classroom. One being whole-class choral reading since “research has shown that both poor and good readers benefit from WCCR because they are engaged in deliberative practice with what is most often grade-level text, or text that may be above the reading level of some students” (Paige, 87). However, WCCR begins with teacher modeling, “hearing the teacher read the text aloud provides students with a model of how to pronounce the
words, what is an appropriate reading pace, and what kind of expression to apply when reading” (Fisher, 88). It’s recommended that the texts used are taken from the curriculum, in which case this strategy will have many benefits for the class as a whole, “first, students become familiar with the important words and how to read them correctly. Students also gain background knowledge on the topic which means the teacher can spend less time on introductory material and more time going deeper into the subject matter. Finally, students improve their reading skills...where no student is asked to read aloud in front of the class” (Paige, 88). Sometimes, depending on class size, it’s challenging to do a WCCR, and paired reading can create a similar outcome. However it is important to remember that “it is helpful if a less fluent reader is paired with a more fluent reader” yet “the difference should not be dramatic” (Paige, 89). By implementing fluency strategies teachers help all students gain access to the challenging texts they will encounter in middle and secondary schools, bringing them a step closer to concrete reading comprehension.

**Vocabulary**

Along with fluency, vocabulary also plays a large role in terms of reading comprehension, “if students lack terms to identify and explain a nuanced concept, they may also lack a unique or rich understanding of that concept” (Nitzkin, 27). Even great teachers struggle to seamlessly implement vocabulary instruction, but “the demand on vocabulary knowledge intensifies throughout the elementary and middle years” and “without meaning, words and phrases are nothing more than a nonsensical string of sounds or letters” (Fisher, 595). Fisher and Frey suggest
through their research that teachers focus on these “components of word learning: wide reading, selecting words to teach, modeling word solving, and providing students opportunities through collaborative conversations to actually use their growing vocabularies” (Fisher, 595) The first component seems pretty obvious, it’s been researched, proven, and known for years that one of the best ways students can “build their vocabularies is through reading” (Fisher, 595). By reading a wide variety of texts, students are not only growing their vocabulary knowledge, but also their background knowledge. Directly teaching words is where vocabulary learning becomes more complicated since “teachers simply cannot directly teach all of the words students need to learn” which is “thousands of words per year, depending on their grade level” (Fisher, 596). In terms of direct vocabulary instruction, the focus should be on Tier 2 words, “those that mean different things in different content areas or contexts” and Tier 3 words, “terms that are domain-specific” such as “photosynthesis, personification, odd number” (Fisher 596). The researchers provide a helpful organizer to assist teachers in this task.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Considerations for Selecting Vocabulary Words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Questions to Ask</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Represenative</td>
<td>• Is the word representative of a family of words that students should know?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Is the concept represented by the word critical to understanding the text?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Is the word a label for an idea that students need to know?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Does the word represent an idea that is essential for understanding another concept?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeatability</td>
<td>• Will the word be used again in this text? If so, does the word occur often enough to be redundant?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Will the word be used again during the school year?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportable</td>
<td>• Will the word be used in group discussions?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Will the word be used in writing tasks?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Will the word be used in other content or subject areas?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contextual Analysis</td>
<td>• Can students use context clues to determine the correct or intended meaning of the word without instruction?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structural Analysis</td>
<td>• Can students use structural analysis to determine the correct or intended meaning of the word without instruction?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive Load</td>
<td>• Have I identified too many words for students to successfully integrate?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition, teachers should consider introducing students to connectives as part of vocabulary instruction. A recent study by Crosson and Lesaux has discovered that “knowledge of connectives is a significant predictor of reading comprehension performance, above and beyond word reading efficiency and breadth of vocabulary knowledge” (Crosson, 253). Connectives include “adverbs such as ‘therefore’ and ‘nonetheless’, and conjunctions, such as ‘though’ and ‘since’, that act as guiding cues, which can assist readers’ understanding of relationships between text propositions” (Crosson, 242). Being aware of and understanding these connectives supports reading comprehension by “signaling the relationship between ideas and information...connectives often carry crucial meanings that play an important role in guiding the reader to make sense of textual relations” (Crosson, 242). Even so, eventually the teacher will not be there to teach specific words, which is why it’s critical that students learn word solving strategies so that they are able to figure out word meaning independently when encountering unknown vocabulary. Through the use of “context clues, word parts or morphology, and resources” (Fisher, 597) they can successfully accomplish this, but still need to be made aware of these strategies. Some lessons should focus on providing students with the information that “context clues are those that are included around the unknown word...that help the reader understand the target word. Prefixes, suffixes, roots, bases, word families, help the reader figure out the word. Resources...such as dictionaries, thesauri...are things outside of the text that help a reader determine meaning” (Fisher, 597). With smartphones and computers these outside resources are especially easily available, if they are understood to be useful tools. The highest level
of vocabulary knowledge is applying it, whether in writing or in speaking, which is why students should be encouraged to “engage with words they are learning” through “interactive read-alouds...collaborative text-based discussions...” and even “games” (Fisher, 598). Vocabulary instruction is extremely important in supporting reading comprehension, but “teaching vocabulary as an isolated skill undermines the ways students use language as a tool for learning about the world...vocabulary instruction should leverage interactions between teacher, student, and text such that students are continually growing in their ability to describe, explain, and query” (Fisher, 598).

**Assessing Reading Comprehension**

As it has been stated multiple times in this chapter, reading comprehension is a complex process, and “assessment of this skills is a difficult task” because “comprehension is monitored, examined and assessed indirectly” (Bastug, 282). But, with assessments being made a priority, “teachers are attempting to meet increasing accountability standards, but meeting reading ability is a difficult task...the complexity of the reading process makes it challenging to assess exactly what is happening when readers read and understand text” (Hosp, 59). Nonetheless, various techniques have been employed to attempt and assess reading comprehension, including “multiple-choice, open-ended, gap filling, sentence verification, correct/incorrect, pairing, narration, summarizing” (Bastug, 282) and many more similar methods. In her research, Hollenbeck analyzes external (teacher-centered acts) and internal (reader-controlled acts) aspects of
comprehension, demonstrating how difficult it is to assess comprehension. She does this through the representation of an iceberg, as there are visible “above water” and invisible “below water” parts, just as with reading comprehension.

Instructional methods, such as teaching strategies or comprehension strategies, are teacher-centered acts that can be observed. Familiar classroom activities might consist of graphic organizers, story maps, teacher questioning, etc. A specific strategy that “has been found to be successful in helping students with informational text comprehension is Collaborative Strategic Reading” (McCown, 239) in which students “working in cooperative groups, implement the following processes: preview (brainstorm background knowledge and predict, click and clunk (identify word–level challenges and apply fix-up strategies), get the gist (identify the main ideas), and wrap up (develop and answer questions, review new learning) (Hollenbeck, 562). Teachers can often see physical attempts made by students to apply strategies, such as “marking the page with highlights or annotation, flipping the page to preview or skim, turning back to reread” however, “strategies can also be applied in nonstrategic ways, such as physically highlighting the majority of a
page without determining text importance” (Hollenbeck, 562). Therefore, observing a student applying a strategy does not necessarily mean that it is providing successful and helping with comprehension. As can be observed in the illustration, background knowledge, metacognition, and motivation, are internal aspects that assist in reaching comprehension, but are not physically visible. Comprehension strategies “rest on the foundation of a reader’s prior knowledge...without adequate background knowledge, strategy use is inefficient or impossible...activation of background knowledge and strategy use interact with, and are supported by, metacognition, or thinking about thinking, a central aspect of reading proficiency” (Hollenbeck, 562-563). Lastly, “the influence of motivation on comprehension is profound...both ‘skill’ and ‘will,’ knowledge and motivation, are required to employ strategies. If a student does not see the value of comprehension strategies, or believes he or she cannot be successful in their use, then he or she is unlikely to read in a strategic manner” (Hollenbeck, 563). All these factors are impossible to enforce, as they are internal and unique to each student, “but the standards focus on what can be observed and quantified” resulting in teachers focusing “on comprehension strategies as final products, rather than presenting them as tools for constructing meaning” (Hollenbeck, 564). This is unfortunate, leaving many students unable to make sense of the challenging texts they are expected to understand through the use of enforced comprehension strategies they view as additional tasks. Teachers should be aware that many factors influence reading comprehension, and focusing on teaching strategies in isolation will not improve reading comprehension. Instead, teachers should still introduce strategies to students, providing them as tools, but
also during instruction of literature demonstrate how these strategies could be beneficial in guiding them to comprehend difficult texts.

**Critical Reading**

To address reading comprehension issues critical reading strategies have been used in ELA classrooms to encourage increased comprehension when reading. Jinhong Yu outlines critical reading as a five step process meant to enhance students’ understanding of the text as they read. The first step is pre-reading and “this simple strategy includes scanning the text to try to find specific information to help understand the text, and skimming to get a general idea of the content and organization of the text, and identifying the purpose for writing” (Yu, 135). Reading in context is the second step, asking the reader to “place a text in its historical, biographical, and cultural contexts” (Yu, 135). By thinking of the time period, the readers are able to make associations as to what the author’s purpose for writing was. In addition, during this process students can apply background knowledge, information they already know that connects to the text. To further understanding students then ask questions and answer them; this is step three. Instead of the teacher providing questions, students design questions themselves because “the students will understand the material better and remember is longer if they write questions after they finish reading. (Yu, 135-136). After thinking and reflecting about what they have read, step four of critical reading, students demonstrate their understanding. This is done in the last step and through activities such as outlining and summarizing. They are very similar, but “outlining a text basically means listing
all the important facts and examples together, while summarizing a text is to develop a new text based on the original structure of the reading material” (Yu, 136). This is the most crucial part of critical reading because it deepens understanding and checks for understanding – “readers are required to put ideas together in their own words and in a much more condensed form, which shows how reading critically can lead to deeper understanding of any text” (Yu, 136). These are all wonderful practices that can certainly be used with some texts, but these five steps might not be ideal to complete with every text read in the classroom in order to improve comprehension due to time constrains and also depending on text complexity.
Chapter Three: Application

Mini-Unit of Comprehension Strategies

The use of comprehension strategies should not be a teacher-led type of activity, but instead these strategies have to be “conscious and flexible plans that readers apply and adapt to a variety of texts and tasks” (Graves, 41). However, the direct explanation of strategies is the first step of effective comprehension instruction. In fact “multiple studies have found the teaching of reading strategies effective” (Klapwijk, 1). The unit “begins with the teacher doing the bulk of the work – explaining the strategy, noting its importance, modeling its use...gradually the instruction progresses from a situation is which the teacher does most of the work to one in which students assume primary responsibility for use of the strategy” (Graves, 41).

This progression of an expectation that students will choose to use learned strategies independently is essentially one of the main goals of comprehension instruction – the other being providing these strategies as tools, since without these explicit lessons students will not be aware of the strategies. Graves and Liang outline that “using direct explanation is a powerful, effective, and efficient way to initially teach a strategy. However, relying exclusively on direct explanation to teach a strategy may result in a problem. Used by itself, direct explanation may be too artificial and too separated from the ongoing activities of the classroom. Students may learn to use the strategy during the special periods set aside for strategy
instruction but then fail to use it when they are reading in other subject areas and at home” (Graves, 42).

The particular strategies chosen to be taught during these four lessons include teaching what root words, prefixes, suffixes are, and more importantly making it clear to the students how breaking up words into parts enhances vocabulary and reading comprehension. Students will also be introduced to the different types of context clues, so that they are able to locate them and attempt to define unfamiliar words. A brief lesson on how correct highlighting can serve as a tool, especially when dealing with long, informative texts, is mentioned as well. Lastly, students are taught a few strategies to use during and after reading in connection to paraphrasing, summarizing, and questioning. The hope is that through the use of these strategies students become independent in monitoring their own understanding.

While the mini-unit presented in this section acts as the initial teaching of a few reading strategies meant to boost comprehension, it cannot stand alone if teachers wish for students to view these strategies as tools instead of just another unit in the year’s curriculum. Whether the following unit deals with reading non-fiction or fiction, these strategies must be referenced constantly and students should be expected to apply them as they attempt to understand the text.

**Application of Comprehension Strategies within a Novel Unit**

A novel unit is a typical part of an ELA curriculum. By middle school much of the reading is done independently so it’s important teachers are using some way to
monitor comprehension of the text, as much of the class work revolves around clarifying and analyzing the text at a deeper level. As students are introduced to the novel, in this particular case, *Speak* by Laurie Halse Anderson, activating their prior knowledge is important to ensure they are prepared for new information. Klapwijk explains that “when readers bring relevant background knowledge to the reading process, they can allocate more attentional space for textual analysis and interpretation” (Klapwijk, 5). The activity assigned to accomplish this goal is students completing a free-write activity about their first day of middle school. Guiding questions are present to help them focus on specific events of that day. A reflection such as this draws connections between their personal experiences and the experiences of the main character they will be introduced to within the first few pages of the reading, increasing comprehension of character development. These types of reflections will be written many times throughout the unit, often as an anticipatory set, always with questions that guide students to make connections between their personal experiences and events happening in the story. In addition, throughout the unit students will learn more root words/prefixes/suffixes which they will be asked to incorporate in these free-writes as they're choosing particular words to express their thoughts.

In the beginning of the unit students receive a packet outlining the expectations and making it clear what the focus will be – in other words “determining the purpose for reading.” Those comprehension strategies that were taught during the mini-unit appear in this packet, and students are asked to apply them as they are reading the text section by section. Introducing this information at
the start of the unit “primes the learners’ attitude toward the text and directs their motivation and concentration for reading” (Klapwijk, 5).

One of the focuses of this novel unit is vocabulary. As it was previously mentioned, vocabulary plays a great role in either hindering or heightening reading comprehension. The challenging vocabulary words for this grade level found in the novel are listed in the packet. It is the students’ job to use strategies they learned during the mini-unit, such as noticing context clues and breaking up the words into parts (prefixes, suffixes, roots), to figure out the meaning of the vocabulary word. In their packet they’re encouraged to look closely at the sentence, noting the page number and quoting the sentence that vocabulary word is used in, and then writing down what they believe is the definition. This is a task expected to be done independently, confirming or clarifying their definition must be done in class as well. This task will be allocated for “review for vocab quiz” days. During this time, the students who spent the time filling out that portion of the packet will have an opportunity to share their definitions and receive bonus points which will be added to their quiz. Then, dividing the class into two big groups and playing charades/pictionary will ensure all students are familiar with the vocabulary words and their appropriate definitions, even if they didn’t complete the independent portion of acquiring new vocabulary. The quiz will feature vocabulary questions and also short answer questions regarding the chapters of the novel read. This form of assessment will determine where areas of confusion still exist, and if any of this information needs to be addressed before moving on with the unit.
The last portion of the packet, which must be completed with every reading, is a notes page. This particular activity references the paraphrasing/summarizing/questioning strategies from the mini-unit. The “notes” portion of the organizer is meant to be filled out during reading so that students are making meaning as they are reading the text. Often times “poor readers simply plough ahead without realizing that they no longer understand what they are reading” but creating this expectation that they must take notes during reading “attempts to teach the following learners’ monitoring of their own understanding.” (Klapwijk, 6) Seeing a blank page even after they’ve completed the reading assigned should make the student ask themselves “Do I really understand what I am reading?” The directions state what type of information constitutes as examples of good quality note-taking. If they are really struggling with jotting down information, the simple “5 W’s and H” strategy taught during the mini-lesson can act a guide to narrow down on the most important parts of that reading section. The organizer also contains a section where students write down two questions they have in connection to the reading. Through the use of Question-Answer Relationship strategy (QAR), “learners who ask questions when they read assume responsibility for their learning and improve their comprehension” (Klapwijk, 7). There are a variety of questions students can write down and Kalpwijk organizes them into four categories. “Right There” questions might be answered during classroom discussions, since it’s a question with an answer found in the text. A “Think and Search” question can be answered in class as well, but requires putting together information from different parts of the text. Both of these types of questions will
appear on a student’s paper if they’re not reading closely enough, however, through the use of this strategy they are being metacognitive, and during classroom conversations should realize that the answer is present in the reading, hopefully working toward writing down deeper-level questions. These can be referred to as “Author and You” questions, as well as “On My Own” questions. Both of these types of questions force the students to make connections beyond the text. The first requires the students to relate the information in the text to their own experiences, and the latter, involves the students using their prior knowledge in order to come up with an answer. The last step of completing the note-taking organizer is writing a brief summary of that specific reading section. It is argued that “teaching learners to summarize a text is regarded as an important skill for successful schooling and academic literacy,” in fact, summarization has been described as “one of the top nine effective teaching strategies in the history of education” (Lapwijk, 7). In order to successfully summarize a reading “strong comprehension and higher-level thinking” is required (Lapwijk, 7). As a starting point, students can apply the “5W’s and an H” or the “Somebody wanted to but so” strategy to make sure they’re not leaving out any key information.

As with any novel unit, discussions regarding literary devices, such as allusion and symbolism, will be incorporated into the unit plan as the means of digging deeper into the figurative meaning of the occurrences within the text. However, it is the students’ responsibility to follow the reading calendar and apply the strategies they were taught to monitor their comprehension of the text, at first narrowing in on the literal meaning, but progressing towards deeper-level
understanding through practice with the organizer and through participation in classroom discussions.
Lesson Plan #1 – Root Words, Prefixes, and Suffixes

Common Core Standards:
- L6-12.4 Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting general and specialized reference materials, as appropriate.
- L8.4b Use common, grade-appropriate Greek or Latin affixes and roots as clues to the meaning of a word (e.g., belligerent, bellicose, rebel).

Objectives:
1. Students will review what root words, prefixes, and suffixes are.
2. Students will understand how breaking down words to the smallest form will help with reading comprehension.
3. Students will practice defining the meaning of prefixes/suffixes and also combining root words with prefixes/suffixes to create real words.

Materials: Pens/pencils, laptops/computers, index cards.

Anticipatory set:
- Ask if the students have ever spent time reading something and at the end of the reading could not explain what it is they read. Ask how often they encounter new words when reading. Discuss what “reading strategies” mean to the students and how these strategies are designed to help the reader understand the text better.

Beginning activity: teacher led
- Define root words, prefixes, suffixes. See if they are familiar with these terms.
- Pass out a handout of prefixes and suffixes used the most in the English language. Click Here. Go over them together. Also, create large posters to display in the classroom for students to refer to.

Middle activity: guided practice
- Practice determining which part of the word is the root, prefix, and suffix. Click Here
- Practice matching prefixes with root words. Click Here

Closing activity: individual work
- See if the students can define the meaning of prefixes. Play a game with hints “Sink Those Prefixes” Click Here

Assessment: ticket out the door (index card)
- How does breaking down words into parts help with reading comprehension?
Remember…

A root word is a word without any parts added to the beginning or end. It’s in its smallest part and cannot be broken down.
Ex: happy, view

A prefix is a word part placed before a root word.
Ex: unhappy, preview

A suffix is a word part placed after a root word.
Ex: happily, viewed

What Word Am I?
Using the “most common suffixes & prefixes” handout, create 1 word from the phrases below.

Not happy =
No order =
Not possible =
Not correct =
Pay before =
Arrange again =
Able to be enjoyed =
Made of wood =
One who sings =
Full of care =
Can be reversed =
Process of graduating =
Without fear =
Doing something in a quiet manner =
Lesson Plan #2 – Defining Words Using Context Clues

Common Core Standards:

- **L6-12.4** Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting general and specialized reference materials, as appropriate.
- **L8.4a** Use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence or paragraph; a word’s position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.

Objectives:

1. Students will review what the phrase “context clues” means.
2. Students will learn the 4 types of context clues through definitions and examples given.
3. Students will practice this strategy by reading sentences/paragraphs that contain words they are unfamiliar with and attempt to define them by finding context clues.


Anticipatory set:

- Write a sentence on the board using a vocabulary word (with no prefixes or suffixes) the students are not familiar with. Ask them if they are able to figure out the meaning of the word by breaking it down. They shouldn’t be able to.
- Explain that we can't always rely on word parts to determine the meaning of a word because not all words have prefixes and suffixes. Today, we will learn a new strategy to help us find the meaning of words that we do not know.
- Defining words using context clues – by carefully reading a sentence, you can find clues that will help you define the word that’s unfamiliar.
- Show the “Context Clues Game” PowerPoint where the students read a short passage with made up words and try to figure out what word fits best based on the clues in the sentence. It should be pretty simple for them to figure out the nonsense words, but it’s not meant to be difficult – it’s just so they get an idea of what using context clues looks like.

Beginning activity: teacher led

- Pass out “Types of Context Clues” notes sheet and go over the 4 types along with the examples.

Middle activity: guided practice

- Practice finding the best matching word to the unknown word using context clues. [Click Here]
- Pass out the “Finding Context Clues” handout and work on it together with the students.
Closing activity: individual work

- Pass out the "Finding Context Clues" handout.

Assessment: partner-share

- Ask students to write a descriptive sentence with context clues on an index card, but to leave out a key word. Have them read each other’s sentences to try and fill in the blank with a suitable word.

  Example:
  Sam bought a new ______. NO!
  Sam bought a new ______ at the bicycle store. YES!
Dear Diary,

I overslept this morning. I had to eat my bowl of poof-poofs very quickly, and I almost missed the tramzam. When I got to school, I realized I had forgotten my zilging. Luckily, Ms. Jutzi is very zoosh, and told me I could bring it tomorrow.

After school, some friends and I played plingming. It’s a new game I am learning. We scored 7 points and they only scored 5 points, so we were the zoiters!

Dad says that next weekend we’re going to the fladder. I can’t wait! I love to swim and play in the sand. I hope I don’t get a sunburn though.

Well, I better go to bed soon. I don’t want to wake up late again and miss my tramzam!

Until tomorrow,
Ryan
Let's check our answers...

- What could the word **poof-poofs** mean?
  - The sentences tell me it is something that can be eaten. I know that it is a breakfast food because Ryan said it was morning. I also know that it goes in a bowl. What do you think it is?
  - The most logical guess would be a type of cereal.

- What could the word **tramzam** mean?
  - The sentences tell me that Ryan was going to school and he almost missed his tramzam. What do you think it is?
  - The most logical guess would be a school bus.

- What could the word **zingling** mean?
  - The sentences tell me that it is something Ryan needed at school. I also know that it is ok if he brings it tomorrow. What do you think it is?
  - The most logical guess would be Ryan's homework.

- What could the word **zoosh** mean?
  - The sentences tell me that a person can act this way and that Ms. Jutzi is being kind and allowing Ryan to bring his homework the next day. What do you think it is?
  - The most logical guess would be friendly or understanding.

A few more to go...

- What could the word **plingming** mean?
  - The sentences tell me it is a game Ryan and his friends play against each other and that points can be scored. What do you think it is?
  - The most logical guess would be a sport such as basketball or soccer.

- What could the word **zoiters** mean?
  - The sentences tell me that Ryan's team scored 7 points while the other team scored less points. What do you think it is?
  - The most logical guess would be that it means winners.

- What could the word **fladder** mean?
  - The sentences tell me that Ryan's dad said he could go there and when he gets there they will swim and play in the sand. Ryan also mentions not wanting a sunburn. What do you think it is?
  - The most logical guess would be a lake or a beach.

- And, remember, we already figured out the word **tramzam** probably means school bus.
Learning Words from Context Clues
Types of Context Clues

1. **EXAMPLES.** The context of a word will sometimes give examples that will give you a pretty clear idea of meaning. Suppose you want to know the meaning of the word *gestures* in the paragraph below. How many examples are given in the paragraph?

*Some dogs can be trained to respond to gestures instead of sounds; for example, a hand pointing in a certain direction, an open hand, palm down, or arms outstretched can be used to mean go sit or come to a well-trained dog.*

2. **DEFINITIONS.** Sometimes the writer will save you the trouble of looking up a word by defining it for you.

*It is a fact that a large number of small businesses fail because the owner hasn’t enough capital to tide him over slack periods and emergencies that is, it takes a certain amount of working money to keep a business going.*

3. **DESCRIPTIVE WORDS.** You can sometimes piece together the meaning of a word by a little detective work. Look at the word in bold. Which words in the following description help you understand the meaning of the underlined word?

*The first impression that crossed my mind was that the woman was obese. Her clothing was stretched across her vast surface of skin like a lumpy balloon stretched to the bursting point.*

4. **OPPOSITES.** One further way to pick up the meaning of a new word or expression is by looking for clues that tell you what the word does NOT mean. Words like *but, except, and however*, tell you that you are now going to read an opposite idea.

*He tried to smile because the mood of the party was not somber, but happy.*

*You know that somber must mean something that is the opposite of happy. In fact, it means sad or dreary.*

*If you can’t find anything to praise in the class, at least don’t denounce it.*

*You know here that denounce must mean something opposite to praise. It means to condemn or criticize.*
Finding Context Clues – Practice

Watch for examples, definitions, and descriptive words to help you determine the meaning of the underlined words. Write your definition on the lines following.

1. The initial training period, the first six weeks, is the hardest.

___________________________________________________________________________

2. You could see how repugnant the bitter medicine was by the way she shuddered and made a face as she swallowed it.

___________________________________________________________________________

3. Many things we use as condiments in our food, such as pepper, curry powder, and paprika, cannot be grown in this country.

___________________________________________________________________________

4. Company representatives are usually reimbursed for their expenses when they make business trips; that is, they are repaid for money they have spent for the company.

___________________________________________________________________________

5. If you want to save gas, trade in your big car and get a compact car.

___________________________________________________________________________

6. You don’t have to concur with what I say, but at least listen with an open mind.

_____________________________________________
Lesson Plan #3 – Highlighting Correctly

Common Core Standards:
- R6-12.2 Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

Objectives:
- Students will learn how much of a text should be highlighted, and what type of information they should be highlighting.
- Students will read passages and practice highlighting only the key words, phrases, and ideas.


Anticipatory set:
- Ask kids how often they use their highlighters while they read. Also, talk about how colorful their paper looks once they’re done reading.
- Discuss with students that highlighting can be a helpful tool but not when almost the entire reading passage is in color, because then they’re re-reading the majority of the passage instead of only reviewing key ideas.

Beginning activity: teacher led
- Pass out the “What Do I Highlight?” notes handout. Go over it together.

Middle activity: guided practice
- Together, read and highlight the article “Work Your Mind”

Closing activity: individual work
- Pass out another article, “Debate! Do Kids Need Their Own Cell Phones?”

Assessment: reflection
- Ask the students to use this strategy on their next reading assignment (one they’re allowed to highlight/write on). Once they do so, a few dates later, ask them to reflect on a piece of paper if it helped them or not during a class discussion, while answering questions, etc. (or a test if they decided to highlight notes while studying).
What Do I Highlight?

The point of highlighting is to remember where the most important pieces of information are found within the body of the text.

Highlight:
- key words
- key phrases
- key vocabulary
- key ideas

Don’t highlight:
- a sentence/paragraph you didn’t finish reading yet
- an entire paragraph
- an entire sentence

Use your Pen/Pencil:
- circle unknown words
- put question marks next to confusing passages
- write notes for yourself on the margins

Color-Coded Highlighting Strategy: use different colors to highlight a variety of key information.

**important vocab** main ideas **supporting examples**
Work Your Mind

Figuring something out on your own may be the best way to learn
By Annie Murphy Paul and Stephanie Kraus

Here’s something to think about the next time you ask your teacher for help: struggling with schoolwork on your own can help you learn. According to a recent study, the more you struggle while you are learning new information, the better you can remember it later.

This theory might surprise you. When teachers are presenting new information, they often give students lots of help. But a new study shows this may not be the best way to support learning. “Don’t be too quick to get help when learning something new,” education expert Manu Kapur told TFK. “Try to work on it yourself even if it means trying different ways.”

How to Learn

Kapur came up with the idea that struggling can lead to better learning. Then he tested it out on students in Singapore. He separated students into two groups. In the first group, students were asked to solve math problems with the teacher’s help. In the second group, students were asked to solve the same problems by helping one another, instead of getting help from the teacher.

With the teacher’s help, students in the first group were able to find the correct answers. Students in the second group did not solve the problems correctly. But they did come up with a lot of good ideas.

The students were then tested on what they had learned. The group without any help from a teacher scored much higher than the group who had help. Kapur said working to find the answers helped students understand the process, not just the solution.

Kapur’s advice for kids is to put a lot of effort into learning something new rather than going to your teacher for help. “Simply doing a little work or nothing at all won’t work,” says Kapur. “The struggle needs to be a genuine attempt to figure out or solve a problem in as many ways as possible.”
Debate! Do kids need their own cell phones?

Most cell phone companies design models especially for kids. But parents are usually the ones buying the phones, and paying the bill. According to a July 2012 study, 56% of parents of children ages 8 to 12 have given their children a cell phone. The percentage goes up with age. The study, by ORC International for the National Consumers League (NCL), basically proves what many people already assumed: many kids, if not most, have their own cell phones.

According to a recent YouthBeat survey, 12 is the magic number. It is the most common age for kids to get their first cellphone. But 13% of children ages 6 to 10 already have one. That’s more than one out of every 10 kids.

Pro-cell phone people, including many parents, note that cell phones help kids keep in touch with their friends and families. They believe that cell phones are an important tool in an emergency. Kids can stay connected with their parents at all times, whether it’s to ask for a ride home from soccer practice or to receive a good-luck text message moments before a big game. Plus, some people say having a cellphone helps teach kids to be responsible. Some cell phones designed for kids can be controlled with settings that allow the phone to only be used in parent-approved ways. What’s the harm in that?

But other people are worried about the health and safety effects of kids’ cell phones. They believe that plugged-in kids could be missing out on other activities, such as playing outside or hanging out with friends, and that sending text messages or fielding phone calls while doing homework is bad for concentration. They say that kids are spending too much time texting instead of talking to each other. "Our brains evolved to communicate face to face," says Gary Small, a professor of psychiatry at the UCLA School of Medicine, in California. "A lot of this is lost with texting."

Another concern is cyberbullying, which is on the rise as more kids use e-mail and text messages to communicate. And some experts are concerned about possible health risks. They worry that radiation—or energy waves—released by cellphones could be harmful to young people. To be safe, many pediatricians advise limiting talk time.
Mini-Unit: Reading Comprehension Strategies
Grade: 8

**Lesson Plan #4 – Paraphrasing/Summarizing/Questioning**

Common Core Standards:
- R6.12.2 Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
- R8.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.

Objectives:
- Students will learn reading strategies to use during reading and after reading.
- Students will practice using these strategies to rephrase & summarize what they read and check their comprehension.

Materials: Pen/pencil, large index cards.

Anticipatory set:
- What do we do when we need to remember something? We write it down. Similarly with reading, in order to remember and make sense of (organize our thoughts) the information presented, it helps to write it down. It might seem like more work, but you're actually saving the time you would use to re-read the passage over and over again.

Beginning activity: teacher led
- Pass out the “While Reading/After Reading” notes and go over the strategies.

Middle activity: guided practice
- Read a short story “The Dinner Party” and have the students summarize each paragraph/section (one word or one short sentence). [Click Here for the Story](#)
- Fill out the “5W’s & an H” worksheet based on the story.
- Read another short story, “The Necklace” and have the students summarize each paragraph/section (one word or one sentence). [Click Here for the Story](#)
- Fill out the “Somebody Wanted But So” worksheet on this second story.

Closing activity: individual work
- Ask the students to write down one question they still have about one of the readings – their choice.

Assessment: ticket out the door (large index card)
- Ask the students to summarize the lesson on a piece of paper.
  - What did we do in class today?
  - Why is it important to rephrase/summarize after reading?
  - How does summarizing help you understand the text better?
*While Reading*

One Sentence/One Word Summary
➢ Read the first paragraph. Cover the paragraph. Write one sentence or one word that reflects your understanding of the paragraph. Don’t copy, create your own. Do this for every paragraph in the reading.

*After Reading*

5 W’s & an H

Who? Who are the most important characters? Who are the secondary characters?
What? What happened? What is the topic of the lesson? What is the problem?
Where? Where did the event occur? Where is the setting?
When? When did the event occur? When did the problem begin?
Why? Why did the event, issue, or problem occur?
How? How is the lesson, problem, or issue important? How can the problem be resolved? How does it affect the characters?

Somebody Wanted But So

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Somebody</th>
<th>Wanted</th>
<th>But</th>
<th>So</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cinderella</td>
<td>To go to the ball</td>
<td>Her wicked stepsisters and stepmother didn’t want her to go</td>
<td>Her fairy godmother waved her wand and a carriage appeared to take Cinderella to the ball</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Questioning
➢ After you read the entire passage write down one question you still have.
5 W’s & an H

Who?
___________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________

What?
___________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________

Where?
___________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________

When?
___________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________

Why?
___________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________

How?
___________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________
Somebody Wanted But So

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Somebody</th>
<th>Wanted</th>
<th>But</th>
<th>So</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

I still wonder...
SUMMARIZE TODAY’S LESSON

• WHAT did we do in class today?
• WHY is it important to rephrase/summarize after reading?
• HOW does summarizing help you understand the text better?
Lesson 1– Intro to *Speak*

**Objectives:**
- Students will be introduced to the novel and what is required of them throughout the unit in order to be able to complete the work independently.

**Common Core Standards:**
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.5 Integrate multimedia and visual displays into presentations to clarify information, strengthen claims and evidence, and add interest.

**Beginning activity:** whole class activity/anticipatory set
- Ask students to take out a piece of paper and write a reflection about their first day of middle school. (What did you think the day would be like? Were you nervous? Why/why not? What was the day like? Explain using specific details. Was it what you expected?)
- Ask for some students to share what they wrote. If they don’t want to share with the class, have them talk to a partner. Collect their responses for participation points.

**Middle activity:** teacher-led
- Introduce the author through a prezi presentation. Give students an overview of the novel we’ll be reading in class.
- Hand out the notes packet and explain how they will be filling it out. They are responsible to take notes on the reading, write a summary on every section read, and come up with 2 questions about the reading.
- Students are also responsible to find definitions of new vocab words that are introduced in the novel (these words are listed in the packet).

**Closing activity:** teacher-led
- Start reading the novel. As I read out loud I will demonstrate how to fill out the notes packet, especially generating critical thinking questions about the reading and paying attention to new vocabulary.

**Assessment:** Walk around and check that they filled in some of page 1 of the notes packet, making sure they understand how to do it.

**Homework:** None.
Write a paragraph reflection about your first day of high school (7 sentences)

• What did you think the day would be like?
• Were you nervous? Why/why not?
• What was the day actually like? Explain using details.
• Was it what you expected?

Incorporate Vocab Words: (choose 2) & Prefixes: (choose 2)

- Annihilate
- Imperative
- Correlate
- Uncanny
- Expendable
- Imminent
- Resilient
- Infallibility
- Tangible
- Exotic
- Condone
- Pre, bi, tri,
- Post, re, ex,
- Un, anti,
- Pro, multi
“Nothing is perfect. Flaws are interesting.”

“This is where you can find your soul if you dare.
Where you can touch that part of you that you’ve never dared look at before.”
Speak

By Laurie Halse Anderson

Over the next few weeks we will be reading & discussing Speak by Laurie Halse Anderson.

You Will:
- Complete the daily reading assignments
- Find definitions of new vocabulary from the reading (www.yourdictionary.com)
- Take notes on the reading
  - Use the Cornell Notes pages
  - Fill in the entire notes page in order to receive full credit
- Be prepared to discuss the reading in class
- Be prepared for quizzes on the reading & new vocabulary

Right Hand Column: Notes
In the right hand column, please jot down any notes from the assigned section. Notes could include (but are not limited to):
- Character analysis
- Observations about the book/predictions
- Thoughts/feelings about the book
- Passages you think are important or interesting – be sure to explain your choices
- Connections to the book
- Potential themes
- Potential symbols

Left Hand Column: Questions
In the left hand column jot down at least 2 questions you have regarding the section. You should try to think of critical thinking questions since they will help lead the class discussions.

Summary
Write a 5 sentence detailed summary of the section. Be sure to include as many details as possible.
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<tr>
<th>Word</th>
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<th>Sentence from Book</th>
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**Level 2:** sort, infer, analyze, sequence, organize, solve, explain, compare, contrast, classify, isolate, characterize, make analogies

**Level 3:** conclude, criticize, reorganize, justify, judge, estimate, predict, speculate, make a model, extrapolate, apply a principle, interpret, hypothesize, if/then

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**Summary:**
Lesson 2 – Intro to *Speak*

**Objectives:**
- Students will continue learning about the novel and what is required of them throughout the unit in order to be able to complete the work independently.
- Students will learn new prefixes in order to expand their vocabulary and improve writing and reading skills.

**Common Core Standards:**
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.5 Integrate multimedia and visual displays into presentations to clarify information, strengthen claims and evidence, and add interest.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

**Beginning activity:** teacher-led
- Continue reading to the class (to page 18)

**Middle activity:** teacher-led
- Discuss what has happened so far (review the characters that were introduced, any questions that they have)

**Closing activity:** teacher-led
- Introduce a new list of prefixes/roots/suffixes.
- Ask them to write a paragraph using 4 of the new terms. Students can share with the class.

**Assessment:** Check their notes packets for the first reading section (to page 18).

**Homework:** Fill in the new vocabulary examples/definitions.
PREFIXES/ROOTS/SUFFIXES

Graphy – writing or field of study

Caligraphy

Photography

PREFIXES/ROOTS/SUFFIXES

Ist – person or member

Dentist

Violinist
PREFIXES/ROOTS/SUFFIXES

Extra – outside of

Extra\textit{curricular activities}

PREFIXES/ROOTS/SUFFIXES

Archy – form of government or rule

Monarchy

Extragalactic activities

Extraterrestrial
PREFIXES/ROOTS/SUFFIXES

Contra - against, opposite

Contradict

Contrast

VENN DIAGRAM!

both A and B

PREFIXES/ROOTS/SUFFIXES

Derm - skin

Dermatology

THE BLUE BUTTON IS TRUE
THE RED BUTTON IS FALSE

A

B
PREFIXES/ROOTS/SUFFIXES

Pseudo – fake, false

pseudo friend

PREFIXES/ROOTS/SUFFIXES

A, an – not, without

Atheism Anonymous
PREFIXES/ROOTS/SUFFIXES

Inter – between, among

*Internet* *International*

PREFIXES/ROOTS/SUFFIXES

Intra – within, inside, during

*Intrapersonal* *Intramural sports*
Lesson 3 – Conform/Rebel

Objectives:
- Students will write reflections about their own experiences and opinions in order to make connections to the book.
- Students will read independently for comprehension and analysis.

Common Core Standards:
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Beginning activity: whole class activity/anticipatory set
- Ask students in what way they conform and/or rebel to what is expected of them. They should incorporate the prefixes & suffixes they just learned.
- Ask for some students to share what they wrote. If they don’t want to share with the class, have them talk to a partner. Collect their responses for participation points.

Middle activity: teacher-led
- Put students into groups of 3 or 4 and assign a symbol (tree, mirrors, lips/mouths, closets, changing mascots, and Melinda’s bedroom) for them to keep track of as they read. They will meet a few times with their group throughout the unit to discuss where in the book this symbol was mentioned and eventually they will figure out what they think it represents. Final potion requires them to create a poster and teach the symbol to the class.

Closing activity: independent work
- Students will have time in class to read & fill out the next section of the reading guide packet.

Assessment: No formal assessment.

Homework: Read to page 46 and fill in the notes/vocab.
MAKING CONNECTIONS

- In what ways do you conform to what is expected of you? In what ways do you rebel? (7 sentences)

- Incorporate NEW Prefixes/Suffixes: (choose 2)
  - graphy, ist, extra,
  - archy, contra, derm,
  - peusdo, a/an
  - inter, intra

SYMBOLISM IN SPEAK

- Trees
- Mirrors
- Lips/Mouths
- Closets
- Changing Mascots
- Melinda’s Bedroom
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Lesson 4 – Symbols in Speak

Objectives:
- Students will take a quiz and then participate in a class discussion in order to demonstrate their understanding of the text so far.
- Students will work in a group to find textual evidence of their symbol, analyze it and draw conclusions in order to demonstrate their comprehension of literary elements used by the author.
- Students will read independently for comprehension and analysis.

Common Core Standards:
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

Beginning activity: independent work/teacher-led
- Word Splash Quiz #1 – a few words/phrases from the chapters will be put up on a PowerPoint slide, and the students have to choose 4/7, explaining how they relate to the reading.
- Afterwards, we will discuss the reading as class, including the words/phrases on the quiz.

Middle activity: group work
- Students will meet with their group members and hold a discussion about their symbol, writing down examples of it from the book so far.

Closing activity: independent work
- Students will have time in class to read & fill out the next section of the reading guide packet.

Assessment: Word splash quiz, also check their reading guide packet notes (to page 46).

Homework: Read to page 70 and fill in the notes/vocab.
WORD SPLASH QUIZ #1

Pick 4 of the phrases below and write 2 to 4 sentences for each one explaining how the phrase connects to the book.

“only class that will teach you how to survive”
   Tree
   Rachel/Rachelle
   Goals
“my brother got arrested at that party”
   “Me-no-linda”
   The Marthas
| Level 2: sort, infer, analyze, sequence, organize, solve, explain, compare, contrast, classify, isolate, characterize, make analogies |
| Level 3: conclude, criticize, reorganize, justify, judge, estimate, predict, speculate, make a model, extrapolate, apply a principle, interpret, hypothesize, if/then |

| Name: |
| Pages: 49-70 |

| Question#1: |
| Notes: |

| Question#2: |
| Notes: |
Lesson 5 – Review for Vocab Quiz #1

Objectives:
- Students will learn about allusion in the novel in order to make connections in the future between Melinda and the allusions the author makes.
- Students will review the new vocab in an interactive way in order to make associations between the words and the drawings/actions students demonstrate, which will help them learn/remember the words better.

Common Core Standards:
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.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.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.5 Integrate multimedia and visual displays into presentations to clarify information, strengthen claims and evidence, and add interest.

Beginning activity: teacher-led/whole class activity
- Review what happened in the reading.
- Discuss allusion, what it means, how it’s used on TV, why it’s used.
- Demonstrate how Halse Anderson uses it in the book (Maya Angelou).

Middle activity: teacher-led/whole class activity
- Go over the vocab that has been introduced in the book so far (demerit, eloquent, errant, floundering, inciting, inconspicuous, pseudo, simultaneous, xenophobic). The smart board will pick random students to have an opportunity to get 2 extra points on their quiz by sharing a vocab word they found in the reading and looked up the definition. If they don’t have any, the smart board picks another student.

Closing activity: group work/whole class activity
- Get more familiar with the new vocab by playing Charades/Pictionary.
- The class will be divided into 2 groups, each team will choose a member to go up and either act out the word they pick or draw it on the board.

Assessment: Check their reading guide packet notes (to page 70).

Homework: Study for vocab/reading quiz. Catch up on reading if needed.
ALLUSION

- a reference to something (people, places, events, literary work, myths, or works of art) that the author assumes the reader will recognize. It’s not a coincidence!

MAYA ANGELOU

- Coming-of-age story, overcoming racism & trauma
- No close relationship with parents
- Raped by mother’s boyfriend at the age of 8
- Becomes mute after such an ordeal
- Pregnant at 17
- At the end, embraces her new role as a mother and is capable of responding to prejudice

American author/poet born in 1928

Autobiography: I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings
Lesson 6 – Vocab in *Speak* Quiz #1

**Objectives:**
- Students will take a quiz in order to demonstrate their understanding of the reading and their familiarity with the new vocab words.
- Students will work in a group to find textual evidence of their symbol, analyze it and draw conclusions in order to demonstrate their comprehension of literary elements used by the author.

**Common Core Standards:**
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.1** Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.

**Beginning activity:** whole class activity/anticipatory set
- The smart board will display a matching activity for review. A few students can go up to the smart board and match the definitions with the vocab words.

**Middle activity:** independent work
- Students will take the quiz on vocabulary & most recent reading section (matching & 2 short answer questions).

**Closing activity:** group work
- Students will work in their symbolism groups, adding more quotations from the book that mention the symbol they were assigned.

**Assessment:** Quiz on vocab.

**Homework:** Read to page 92 and fill in the notes/vocab.
Name:

Speak Quiz #1

Vocabulary Matching: 18 points (2 points each)

Match the following vocabulary words with the correct definition.

___ Demerit A. straying from the right course; wandering
___ Eloquent B. an unreasonable fear or hatred of foreigners
___ Errant C. not easily seen; attracting little attention
___ Inconspicuous D. fluent & persuasive
___ Pseudo E. a mark against a person for poor behavior
___ Simultaneous F. urging to action; encouraging
___ Xenophobic G. struggling mentally; in confusion
___ Inciting H. occurring at the same time
___ Floundering I. false; fake

Turn the page...😊
Short Answer: 6 points (3 points each)

Answer the following questions using the quotations to help you. You don’t have to use them in your response. A minimum of 4 sentences is required.

“I place a piece of paper over Barbie’s mouth.”
Mr. Freeman: “This has meaning. Pain.”

1) How is Melinda’s art creation (turkey bones with a Barbie head) symbolic? In other words, what do you think it represents and how does it connect to Melinda? Explain your answer using information you know about Melinda.

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“I make a note to study David Petrakis. I have never heard a more eloquent silence.”
“David Petrakis is my hero”

2) Why is David Petrakis Melinda’s hero? Explain using details from the reading.

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| Level 2: sort, infer, analyze, sequence, organize, solve, explain, compare, contrast, classify, isolate, characterize, make analogies |
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| Question#1: |
| Notes: |

| Question#2: |
| Notes: |

**Summary:**
Lesson 7 – Bullying/Depression Talk

Objectives:

- Students will write reflections about their own experiences and opinions in order to make connections to the book.
- Students will work with various classmates to complete a scenario activity regarding bullying and depression in order to better relate to the characters in the novel and to demonstrate problem-solving skills.

Common Core Standards:

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.

Beginning activity: whole class activity/anticipatory set

- Students will write a reflection about a time in their life they really struggled. Also, they need to mention how they dealt with it and how they should’ve dealt with. They should incorporate the most recent prefixes & suffixes they took notes on.

Middle activity: group activity

- The room will have 6 stations that the students will visit during this activity. On a piece of paper they will write their name and also numbers 1-6 in a random order. They will follow these numbers to move from station to station, which will require them to work with different people at every station as opposed to move as a group. Every station will have a scenario asking for a response that they will problem-solve as a group. These scenarios are about bullying and depression.

Closing activity: whole class activity

- Students will volunteer and share solutions their group came up with. They can also mention real life experiences that connect to the scenarios.

Assessment: Check their reading guide packet notes (to page 92).

Homework: Read to page 116 and fill in the notes/vocab.
MAKING CONNECTIONS

- Think of a time you were really struggling in life (sad, angry, etc.) How did you deal with it? How should you have dealt with it? (7 sentences)

- Incorporate NEW Prefixes/Suffixes: (choose 2)

  graphy, ist, extra,
  archy, contra, derm,
  peusdo, a/an
  inter, intra
We see how bullying affected Melinda. We should aspire to never bring or encourage such mean actions/words. This activity is meant to make you think how you would react to prevent or discourage bullying.

Directions:
Group of 4 max move around to different stations (don’t move together as a group)
Ask students to write on a piece of paper (1 2 3 4 5) in any order. Each student will follow those numbers as they move through the stations.

Scenarios: to print, cut out, and display in different stations

1) You are a high school teacher. One of your usually active students has suddenly begun to withdrawal. You suspect she is suffering from depression. How could you be sure? What steps would you take?

2) A new girl has transferred to your school. As she passes through the hall, you overhear some classmates whisper mean rumors about her. What is your response?

3) Your friends are angry at you. Would you rather get the silent treatment or be angrily confronted? Briefly explain your choice.

4) You notice your friend has been acting weird. You think something major is going on. Talk about what actions you would take and give reasons why you would or wouldn’t do certain things.

5) A group of kids in your class are spreading hurtful rumors about you by sending text messages around. A few of the classmates now won’t speak to you. Even your friends are starting to think they may be true. What should you do?

6) Your friend is doing his/her assignment in class and you overhear a classmate whisper a mean comment about your friend and start laughing with his/her friends.
**Summary:**

| Level 2: | sort, infer, analyze, sequence, organize, solve, explain, compare, contrast, classify, isolate, characterize, make analogies |
| Level 3: | conclude, criticize, reorganize, justify, judge, estimate, predict, speculate, make a model, extrapolate, apply a principle, interpret, hypothesize, if/then |

| Name: | |
| Pages: | 95-116 |

| Question#1: | Notes: |

| Question#2: |

| Summary: |
Lesson 8 – Allusion in Speak

Objectives:
- Students will take a quiz and then participate in a class discussion in order to demonstrate their understanding of the text so far.
- Students will discuss allusion in the novel in order to make connections in the future between Melinda and the allusions the author makes.
- Students will read independently for comprehension and analysis.

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

Beginning activity: independent work
- Word Splash Quiz #2—a few words/phrases from the chapters will be put up on a PowerPoint slide, and the students have to choose 4/7, explaining how they relate to the reading.

Middle activity: whole class activity
- Students will lead a discussion about the reading based on what they wrote down in their notes. We will discuss the significant events of the reading section, along with character analysis and examples of allusion, explaining why Anderson is making connections to these other works of literature (Red Riding Hood, The Scarlet Letter).

Closing activity: independent work
- Students will have class in time to read the next section independently and fill in notes.

Assessment: Quiz on the reading, also check their reading guide packet notes (to page 116)

Homework: Read to page 137 and fill in the notes/vocab.
WORD SPLASH QUIZ #2

Pick 4 of the phrases below and write 2 to 4 sentences for each one explaining how the phrase connects to the book.

Andy Evans
“it looks like I arm-wrestled a rosebush”

Hornets
“you mean we’re not friends anymore?”

Valentine’s Day

Lady of Mercy Hospital
“She’s mute”

THE SCARLET LETTER/HAWTHORNE

Considered a masterpiece (published in 1850)

In the 1640’s Hester conceives a daughter after committing adultery and struggles to create a new life of dignity.

Hester and her lover (a minister) refuse to make their relationship public.

Punishment = letter “A” on clothing (adultery) becomes a badge of shame for all to see.

How does Melinda connect?
RED RIDING HOOD

- Written by Charles Perrault 17th century
- Rewritten by Brothers Grimm 19th century
- The story has been changed to numerous modern adaptations.

One interpretation suggests that the wolf symbolizes a man who is threatening the girl’s virginity.
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Summary:
Lesson 9 – Review for Vocab Quiz #2

Objectives:

- Students will discuss the reading in order to demonstrate their comprehension of the plot and characters.
- Students will review the new vocab in an interactive way in order to make associations between the words and the drawings/actions students demonstrate, which will help them learn/remember the words better.

Common Core Standards:

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.2** Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.5** Integrate multimedia and visual displays into presentations to clarify information, strengthen claims and evidence, and add interest.

Beginning activity: whole class activity

- Students will lead a discussion about the reading based on what they wrote down in their notes. We will discuss the significant events of the reading section, along with character analysis and examples of allusion (Cubism).

Middle activity: whole class activity

- Go over the vocab that has been introduced in the book so far (tenacious, downtrodden, dormant, reluctance, hazing, bigoted, imbecile, conundrum, abysmal). The smart board will pick random students to have an opportunity to get 2 extra points on their quiz by sharing a vocab word they found in the reading and looked up the definition. If they don't have any, the smart board picks another student.

Closing activity: group work/whole class activity

- Get more familiar with the new vocab by playing Charades/Pictionary.
- The class will be divided into 2 groups, each team will choose a member to go up and either act out the word they pick or draw it on the board.

Assessment: Check their reading guide packet notes (to page 137).

Homework: Study for vocab/reading quiz. Catch up on reading if needed.
CUBISM

- In Cubist artwork, objects are analyzed, broken up and reassembled in an abstracted form—instead of depicting objects from one viewpoint, the artist depicts the subject from a multitude of viewpoints to represent the subject in a greater context.

- Why does Cubism appeal to Melinda?
Lesson 10 – Vocab in *Speak* Quiz #2

**Objectives:**
- Students will take a quiz in order to demonstrate their understanding of the reading and their familiarity with the new vocab words.
- Students will work in a group to find textual evidence of their symbol, analyze it and draw conclusions in order to demonstrate their comprehension of literary elements used by the author.

**Common Core Standards:**
- [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.1](#) Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.5](#) Integrate multimedia and visual displays into presentations to clarify information, strengthen claims and evidence, and add interest.

**Beginning activity:** whole class activity/anticipatory set
- The smart board will display a matching activity for review. A few students can go up to the smart board and match the definitions with the vocab words.

**Middle activity:** independent work
- Students will take the quiz on vocabulary & most recent reading section (matching & 4 short answer questions).

**Closing activity:** group work
- Students will work in their symbolism groups, adding more quotations from the book that mention the symbol they were assigned. They can also start creating their posters, but should not decide what their symbol represents until they finish the book.

**Assessment:** Quiz on vocab and the reading.

**Homework:** Read to page 170 and fill in the notes.
Speak Quiz #2

Vocabulary Matching: 18 points (2 points each)

Match the following vocabulary words with the correct definition.

___Abysmal       A. Inactive; lying asleep
___Bigoted       B. Extremely bad
___Conundrum     C. Determined; persistent
___Dormant       D. A difficult problem with no solution
___Downtrodden   E. Unwillingness; resistance
___Hazing        F. Intolerant of other beliefs/opinions
___Imbecile      G. Treated unfairly & cruelly
___Reluctance    H. Foolish, silly, stupid person
___Tenacious     I. Abusing newcomers with humiliating tricks

Turn the page... 😊
Short Answer: 8 points (2 points each)

Answer the following questions to your best ability. Make sure you answer all parts of the question to get full credit by including details from the book.

1. When Melinda sees Andy, what animal does she refer to herself as? Why?
   _______________________________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________________________

2. Who is the only person encouraging Melinda to share her feelings? What does the person say/do that shows us they care?
   _______________________________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________________________

3. Melinda has been struggling with her art project (tree). What famous artist or art style becomes her most recent inspiration?
   _______________________________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________________________

4. Why did Melinda really call the cops during the summer party?
   _______________________________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________________________
   _______________________________________________________________________________________
**Level 2**: sort, infer, analyze, sequence, organize, solve, explain, compare, contrast, classify, isolate, characterize, make analogies

**Level 3**: conclude, criticize, reorganize, justify, judge, estimate, predict, speculate, make a model, extrapolate, apply a principle, interpret, hypothesize, if/then

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**Summary:**

Name: 

Pages: 141-170
Lesson 11 – Speak Up

Objectives:
- Students will write reflections about their own experiences and opinions in order to make connections to the book.
- Students will discuss the reading in order to demonstrate their comprehension of the plot and characters.
- Students will read independently for comprehension and analysis.

Common Core Standards:
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text.

Beginning activity: whole class activity/anticipatory set
- Students will write a reflection on how they would make others listen if they felt like they had no voice. In other words, what other methods can be used to share an opinion/idea/story besides literally talking. They should incorporate the most recent prefixes & suffixes they took notes on.

Middle activity: whole class activity
- Students will lead a discussion about the reading based on what they wrote down in their notes. We will discuss the significant events of the reading section, along with character analysis.

Closing activity: independent work
- Students will have class in time to read the next section independently and fill in notes.

Assessment: Check their reading guide packet notes (to page 170).

Homework: Finish the novel and fill in the notes.
MAKING CONNECTIONS

- How would you make others listen if you felt like you had no voice?

- *Incorporate NEW Prefixes/Suffixes: (choose 2)*
  
  - graphy, ist, extra,
  - archy, contra, derm,
  - peusdo, a/an
  - inter, intra
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**Level 2:** sort, infer, analyze, sequence, organize, solve, explain, compare, contrast, classify, isolate, characterize, make analogies

**Level 3:** conclude, criticize, reorganize, justify, judge, estimate, predict, speculate, make a model, extrapolate, apply a principle, interpret, hypothesize, if/then

**Name:**

**Pages:** 170-198

**Summary:**
Lesson 12 – Melinda’s Progress

Objectives:

- Students will discuss the reading in order to demonstrate their comprehension of the plot and characters.
- Students will work in a group to find textual evidence of their symbol, analyze it and draw conclusions in order to demonstrate their comprehension of literary elements used by the author.

Common Core Standards:

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.2** Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.1** Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.

Beginning activity: group activity
- Students will get into groups of 3 or 4 and will be given an important quotation from the last few chapters of the book. In their group they will discuss how it’s significant. The quotations will all relate to the progress Melinda has made in the book.

Middle activity: whole class activity
- Everyone will share their thoughts and we will create a list of what she had to do in order to overcome her internal identity struggle, and why it was necessary.

Closing activity: group work
- Students will get into their symbolism group and create their posters. They must mention two passages from the book that helped them figure out the meaning of the symbol. A picture of the symbol must also be included, along with an explanation of what the symbol seems to represents.

Assessment: Check their reading guide packet notes (to page 198).

Homework: None, but students need to finish the book if they didn’t yet.
Melinda’s Progress – Quotes for group discussions

I start another subject thread on the wall: *Guys to stay away from*. The first entry is the Beast himself: *Andy Evans.*

She collapses into the chair again. “You have to help me.”
Me: “No, I don’t.”

...the look Mom’s face when I asked if she would let me redecorate my room.

“I didn’t call the cops to break up the party, I write. *I called* – I put the pencil down. I pick it up again – *them because some guy raped me. Under the trees. I didn’t know what to do.* She watches as I carve out the words. She leans closer to me. I write more. *I was stupid and drunk and I didn’t know what was happening and then he hurt – I scribble that out – raped me. When the police came, everyone was screaming, and I was just too scared, so I cut through some back yards and walked home.*"

“He’s not chopping it down. He’s saving it. Those branches were long dead from disease. All plants are like that. By cutting off the damage, you make it possible for the tree to grow again. You watch – by the end of summer, the tree will be the strongest on the block.”
“I crouch by the trunk, my fingers stroking the bark, seeking a Braille code, a clue, a message on how to come back to life after my long under snow dormancy. I have survived. I am here. Confused, screwed up, but here. So, how can I find my way? Is there a chain saw of the soul, an ax I can take to my memories or fears? I dig my fingers into the dirt and squeeze. A small, clean part of me waits to warm and burst through the surface. Some quiet Melinda I haven’t seen in months. That is the seed I will care for.”

(188)

“They say Andy’s been really pissed off ever since. He got wicked drunk at a party and passed out in a bowl of bean dip. Rachael burned everything he ever gave her and left the ashes in front of his locker. His friends laughed at him.”

(191)

“I don’t want to hang out in my little hidey-hole anymore.”

(192)

“I am trapped with Andy Evans”

(193)

“My tree is definitely breathing.”

(196)

Me: “Let me tell you about it.”

(198)
Lesson 13 – Presentations/Test Review

Objectives:
- Students will present their symbol in order to demonstrate understanding of symbolism as a literary element, and also show the ability to use textual evidence to interpret its meaning.
- Students will play Jeopardy in order to review for the test.

Common Core Standards:
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.4 Present claims and findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with relevant evidence, sound valid reasoning, and well-chosen details; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.5 Integrate multimedia and visual displays into presentations to clarify information, strengthen claims and evidence, and add interest.

Beginning activity: Group activity
- Students will present their symbol posters with their group, explaining what they think it means and why.

Middle/Closing activity: Whole class activity
- Students will be divided into 2 groups and play Jeopardy as a class in order to review the important characters/events/literary elements that relate to the book.

Assessment: Posters will be graded on effort & creativity. The symbolism worksheet will be part of the grade which every student in the group must turn in.

Homework: Study for the test.
Symbolism in *Speak*

This novel contains many symbols that communicate a greater meaning. Your job as a group will be to concentrate on **one** symbol in the novel and gather as much information as possible while reading the book. The passages in the book will help you figure out what the symbol represents (its greater meaning). The final portion of the assignment will require you to create a poster with a visual, quotations from the novel, and an explanation of the significance/meaning of the symbol.

**Symbol:**

**Passages from the book:**

Page # ____ 1.

Page # ____ 2.

Page # ____ 3.
The greater meaning:
Lesson 14 – *Speak* Test

**Objectives:**
- Students will take a test in order to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the plot, characters, and literary elements in the book.

**Common Core Standards:**
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

**Beginning activity:** whole class activity
- Show “Listen” poem that Halse Anderson wrote using letters that teens sent her. The book touched many teens that went through similar experiences as Melinda and shared these painful stories with Halse Anderson.

**Middle/Closing activity:** whole class activity
- Students will take a unit test on the novel which will consist of multiple choice question, characterization, and short answer questions.

**Assessment:** Unit test.

**Homework:** None.
Part I: Multiple Choice Questions

Directions: Choose the best answer for each question.

____1. Melinda is the
   a. Protagonist
   b. Antagonist

____2. Andy Evans is the
   a. Protagonist
   b. Antagonist

____3. Why does everyone hate Melinda at the beginning of the novel?
   a. She ran over the school mascot with her car
   b. She burned the school down
   c. She called the cops at an end of the summer party
   d. Students don’t hate her; she is the most popular girl in school

____4. What is the best description of the tone of the book?
   a. Happy Go-Lucky
   b. Depressed and Lonely
   c. Angry
   d. Lazy and Tired

____5. What theme best fits the book as a whole?
   a. True friends will stick with you no matter what
   b. Parents just don’t understand
   c. Don’t be afraid to speak up for yourself
   d. High school can be really difficult

____6. What is the setting of the novel?
   a. Syracuse, NY
   b. Buffalo, NY
   c. Rochester, NY
   d. New York City, New York

____7. “It’s Nathaniel Hawthorne Month in English. Poor Nathaniel. Does he know what they’ve done to him? We are reading The Scarlet Letter one sentence at a time, tearing it up and chewing on its bones.” What literary element is this an example of?
   a. Irony
   b. Metaphor
   c. Allusion
   d. Symbolism
8. What is the climax of the story?
   a. When she is cutting her wrist with a paper clip
   b. When she flashes back to the night she was raped
   c. When Andy offers her some of the jelly doughnut
   d. When Heather tells her she doesn’t want to be her friend anymore

9. Who is her only friend when 9th grade begins?
   a. Andy Evans
   b. The Marriotts
   c. Heather from Ohio
   d. Rachel/Rachelle

10. Which of the following are NOT mascots of Melinda's school?
    a. Trojans
    b. Wombats
    c. Hornets
    d. Knights

11. “It” is an example of:
    a. theme
    b. simile
    c. euphemism
    d. alliteration

12. Which sports is Melinda good at?
    a. Tennis and basketball
    b. Basketball and soccer
    c. Lacrosse and ultimate frisbee
    d. Track and lacrosse

13. What does Melinda write her report about for Mr. Neck’s class?
    a. Depression
    b. Trees
    c. Suffragettes
    d. Suffering

14. Why does David Petrakis tell Melinda that Mr. Neck is right for not accepting her class presentation?
    a. David is afraid Mr. Neck will fail him if he sides with Melinda
    b. The topic of Melinda’s report was successful because they spoke
    c. The paragraph she put on the board was poorly written
    d. Melinda didn’t write about the topic Mr. Neck assigned
15. Who is the first person Melinda tells about being raped?
   a. Rachel/Rachelle
   b. Heather from Ohio
   c. Mr. Freeman
   d. Ivy

16. How does Melinda label herself as the story begins?
   a. Ostracized
   b. Outcast
   c. Ignored
   d. Forgotten

17. What does the janitor’s closet represent to Melinda?
   a. Torture
   b. Freedom
   c. Sanctuary
   d. Fear

18. David is best characterized as a:
   a. Authority figure
   b. Role model
   c. Trouble maker
   d. Slob

19. What animal does Melinda refer to herself as?
   a. Tiger
   b. Monkey
   c. Puppy
   d. Bunny rabbit

20. Melinda starts to clean out the leaves from under the bushes, and realizes how nice it looks when the dead stuff is gone and how much work it’s going to take to finish cleaning up the yard. This is a great example of which literary term?
   a. Irony
   b. Symbolism
   c. Characterization
   d. Setting
Part II: Characters (5 points each)

Directions: For each of the characters write 5 sentences about their role in the book. Be sure to discuss any significant events they were involved in and their relationship to Melinda.

1. David Petrakis:
_________________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________________

2. Andy Evans:
_________________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________________

3. Mr. Freeman:
_________________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________________

4. Mr. Neck:
_________________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________________

5. Heather:
_________________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________________
Part III: Short-Constructed Response Questions (10 points each)

Directions: In a well developed paragraph, answer each of the following questions. Responses must be 7 sentences in length and include specific references to the text and literary elements.

1. We have discussed the symbol of trees and how it was used in the novel Speak. Tell me what trees represent in the novel and how they help depict a theme that you identify.

2. What is the significance of the title of the novel? What is it saying about words and language?
3. Discuss the role of friends and family in Melinda’s life. Is this similar or different from your own experiences? Why or why not?
Lesson 15 – *Speak* Movie

**Objectives:**
- Students will watch the movie on the book in order to have a better visual of the mood of the story and the characters in the story. They will also be required to notice the differences/similarities between the book and the movie.

**Common Core Standards:**
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.5 Integrate multimedia and visual displays into presentations to clarify information, strengthen claims and evidence, and add interest.

**Beginning activity:** whole class activity
- Students will be handed out a Venn diagram that they will fill out as they watch the movie based on the book.

**Middle/Closing activity:** whole class activity
- Students will watch the movie and fill out the Venn diagram, finding similarities and differences between the book and the movie.

**Assessment:** Venn diagram will be evidence whether or not they know the book well enough to compare it to the movie.

**Homework:** None.
Lesson 16 – Compare/Contrast Essay

Objectives:
• Students will write an essay that requires them to compare and contrast two things in order to improve their organization process and use of evidence skills when writing.

Common Core Standards:
• CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
• CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.5 With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed.
• CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.8.2 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

Beginning activity: independent work
• Students will be introduced to the compare/contrast essay. They will use their Venn diagram to write an essay comparing the book to the movie. The essay should be 4 paragraphs - an introduction, 2 body paragraphs (1 listing the similarities and 1 listing the differences), and a conclusion explaining their thoughts on both the book and the movie.
• Students will write a rough draft on a piece of paper, mainly concentrating on the introduction and conclusion since the Venn diagram can act as a rough draft of the 2 body paragraphs.

Middle activity: group activity
• Once their rough draft is finished they will find a partner and read each other’s papers. They are encouraged to make suggestions and corrections they feel will improve their partner’s essay.

Closing activity: independent work
• Students will type up their corrected essay, making sure there are no spelling or grammar mistakes.

Assessment: Essay comparing the book and the movie.

Homework: Finish typing up the essay, print it and bring to class to be collected.
Chapter Four: Conclusions and Recommendations

There are many factors that influence reading comprehension, fluency and vocabulary knowledge being the most common in preventing students from successfully reading and understanding a text. Being aware of the roots – phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary – of comprehension can prepare teachers to spend time in the beginning of the year learning about each student’s individual ability to comprehend grade level material. Teachers then can take measures to integrate comprehension instruction within their curriculum. Any reading unit should encourage students to use reading strategies to monitor their own comprehension, but first educators should pick a handful of strategies appropriate for that grade level and overall student needs, and explicitly teach these strategies to the class. Along with classroom discussions and activities, which often outline the key events of that piece of literature, teachers will also provide students with tools to guide their understanding by drawing connections between reading and strategy use.

In the mini-unit of strategies, only a few of dozens that exist were introduced to students. By looking into literature, teachers should be able to figure out which strategies appeal the most to them and their teaching focus. That is to say, no one strategy is better than another. It’s true that a few of the well known ones are backed up by research, proving to be very successful, but a teacher should match the needs of the students in the school or classroom, since it would be unmanageable to incorporate all of the strategies available, not to mention extremely overwhelming
and discouraging to students. At the middle school level, teaching just four or five strategies should suffice, but if comprehension strategies are introduced at the high school level, students should be able to absorb more information regarding strategies. In this case, a few similar mini-units can be spread out to be taught throughout the school year, each time introducing a new set of strategies and providing opportunities to practice the skill of applying them to the current unit.

Within the novel unit, the packet that goes along with the reading is a guided activity meant to encourage the practice of the newly learned strategies. Since the strategies are so fresh in the students' minds, at this point they are still being asked to apply specific strategies since it's too early to expect them to apply the strategies independently. In order for students to truly attempt to apply these comprehension strategies, high expectations for packet completion must be communicated. During the classroom discussions students should reference the information they wrote down as they read that particular sections of the novel, making it clear that not summarizing the sections or not coming up with questions equals coming to class unprepared. Teachers should keep in mind that slight modifications might be required for certain students, as these lesson plans are geared towards a general classroom audience. Students who struggle with fluency might benefit from after school readings, that way they are still able to practice these comprehension strategies instead of dedicating most of their time to simply finishing the reading itself.

Once it's time to teach a nonfiction unit, for example a research project where students read a variety of informational texts on a particular topic, integrating these
comprehension strategies would work well also. By this time, following the novel unit, students will have had enough practice with the strategies, and should be able to slowly move towards independently choosing which strategies they would like to apply and when. Since each article would introduce its own unique and new ideas, it would be the perfect time for students to carefully decide the appropriate strategy to use for each article individually, or one strategy they believe heightens their understanding of informational text in general. Unit by unit, the goal is to go from guided lessons that require students to use particular strategies, to lessons that still expect the use of strategies, but give students more independence in choosing which strategy to apply, when and why.

Education, as modeled by application portion of this essay, is a two step process. There is no escaping traditional instruction, as within every classroom new information must be presented to students, which is often done through explicit teaching. However, it is that second step, practicing and applying the skills learned that is critical in order for the material to make an impact on a person. The success of comprehension instruction is measured by students independently choosing to use these learned strategies at appropriate times, whether in ELA during their middle school, or in other subject areas later on in their academic years.
Works Cited


