



GRADE
6

ELA

Grade Level Overview



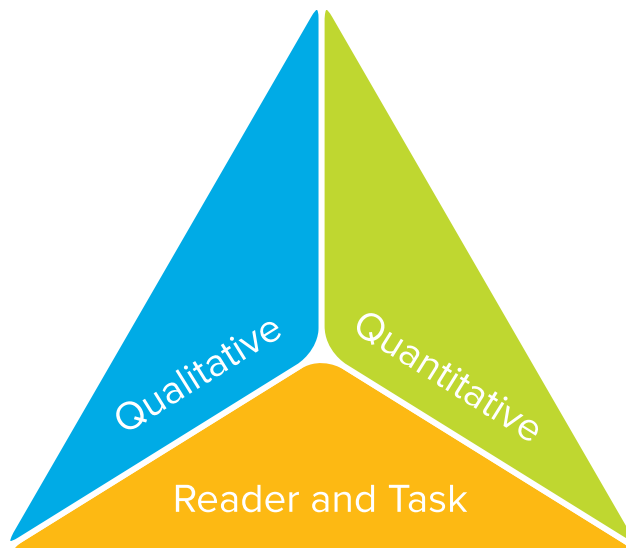
INTRODUCTION | GRADE 6

The Grade 6 Thematic Units take students through literature and informational texts about people facing crucial decisions and learning from their responses. Unit 1, Turning Points, examines what happens when a critical event interrupts and even defines a life, be it a watershed moment of history or a simple choice of which path to take. Unit 2, Ancient Realms, travels back to early Egypt, Greece, Troy, and the settings of myth and fable, to provide inspiration from stories and civilizations that have influenced our own time. Unit 3, Facing Challenges, brings the battles people have fought into the realm of our own century. Unit 4, Our Heroes, focuses on individuals who have met their ordeals with exceptional courage and dignity, leaving their mark on history and on the lives they have touched.

ELA Grade Level Overview

Grade 6

Text Complexity





UNIT 1: TURNING POINTS

Grade 6 Unit 1 serves as the jumping off point for students' grade level goal of proficiently reading and comprehending stories, poems, and literary nonfiction "in the grades 6-8 text complexity band, with scaffolding as needed in the high end of the range." This unit contains a balance of literature (6) and informational texts (5). While the quantitative dimensions (as measured by the Lexile® Framework) of some of the texts in this unit reach above and dip below the recommended quantitative band for Grades 6-8, qualitative dimensions, reader characteristics, and task demands make this a cohesive batch of texts appropriate to the demands of sixth grade readers.

Five of the six literature selections in this unit are fiction, and the protagonists of all five of these selections are children or teenagers. These protagonists face a range of dilemmas in a variety of settings, the fiction selections contain few intertextual references, and the life experience and cultural/literary knowledge demands required of young readers are relatively low. Laurence Yep's *Dragonwings*, one of three Common Core Appendix B text exemplars in this unit, stands out as an exception. The "Build Background" section of the First Read lesson plan addresses the text's prior knowledge demands as students research the experience of Chinese immigrants in San Francisco in the early 1900s to prepare them to better understand Moon Shadow's point of view and the language he uses to describe the "Land of the Golden Mountain" and the "Land of the Demons."

Analyzing point of view and using textual evidence to support analysis is one of the primary task demands in this unit. The very first excerpt in the unit, *Hatchet*, emphasizes analysis of point of view. This task demand makes this an important, challenging selection for students even though the quantitative dimensions of the excerpt are lower than others in the unit. Understanding the protagonist's point of view can be especially difficult for English learners because of the reliance on sentence fragments, so the First Read lesson accompanying this text is scaffolded with additional grammar supports. Further, the excerpt of *Hatchet* is merely a jumping off point for the study of the complete novel, which is the recommended full-text read for this unit.

By the time students read the excerpt from *The Pigman*, the final fiction selection in the unit, the previous short fiction texts and the full-text study of *Hatchet* will have prepared them to analyze a text that, while quantitatively similar to the excerpt of *Hatchet*, contains more sophisticated, implicit levels of meaning and multiple perspectives.

Four of the five informational texts in this unit are autobiographies or memoirs. In addition to this genre overlap, many of the texts employ similar structures and have the same relatively low content/discipline

knowledge demands. These qualitative dimensions make the unit’s texts accessible to students, even though the Lexile measures are high. In addition to the regular scaffolds appearing in all lessons, the language and knowledge demands for the two texts that sit above the quantitative band for grades 6-8, *Guts: The True Stories Behind Hatchet* and the *Brian* Books and “The Father of Chinese Aviation,” are further scaffolded by the order in which students read these texts. Key vocabulary and important prior knowledge for these texts are introduced in the fiction selections, *Hatchet* and *Dragonwings*, that precede them.

Using textual evidence to analyze how an author supports his/her central or main idea is the first important task demand in this unit. Students master this skill before moving forward into lessons focusing on craft and structure. Though its qualitative and quantitative dimensions are similar to other texts in the unit, the task demands in the final informational text, an excerpt from Helen Keller’s *The Story of My Life*, are more challenging as students closely examine the author’s use of connotative and figurative language to develop her ideas.

AUTHOR	Name	Gary Paulsen
	Gender	Male
	Nationality	American
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1987
	Literature / Informational	Literature
	Genre	Fiction
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	This excerpt from Hatchet is set in the Canadian wilderness after Brian's plane crashes in a lake. The story's narrator describes Brian's attempts to think positively about a rescue and to take stock of his supplies as he combats feelings of hunger. To help students understand the main character of Brian, and the internal and external conflicts he faces, use the following ideas to provide scaffolded instruction for a close reading of the more complex features of this text:
	ACT Features	<p>Organization - Longer paragraphs are frequently followed by one-sentence or one-word paragraphs, which serve to slow the pace of the text and allow readers to follow Brian's muddled post-crash thinking as he tries to assess his situation.</p> <p>Genre - The limited-third person narrator focuses on Brian and his situation and does not visit other characters as this voice relays Brian's thoughts, words, and actions. This narrative choice causes readers to sympathize with Brian as they, too, do not know whether a rescue mission is in progress.</p> <p>Specific Vocabulary - Aviation terms, such as flight plan, amphibious planes, and bushplanes, may present a challenge to some readers.</p>
	Excerpt Lexile®	730L
	Full-text Lexile®	1,020L
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Word Count	943
	Skill Lessons	Point of View
	Close Read Prompt	How does the point of view from which Gary Paulsen tells Hatchet help you understand Brian's actions, thoughts, and feelings? Why do you think Paulsen chose to use Brian's third-person limited point of view rather than either Brian's first-person point of view or a third-person objective point of view? Use your understanding of point of view to think about how the story would have been different if you had read it from those other points of view. Support your writing with evidence from the text.
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Informative/Explanatory

*Suggested Full-text Study

Guts: The True Stories Behind Hatchet and the Brian Books

AUTHOR	Name	Gary Paulsen
	Gender	Male
	Nationality	American
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	2001
	Literature / Informational	Informational
	Genre	Memoir
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	Guts: The True Stories Behind Hatchet and the Brian Books provides background on the real-life sources behind the emotional and sensory details in author Gary Paulsen's works. The passage describes the events that take place one early morning during Paulsen's time as an emergency services volunteer in rural Colorado. After being called to help a rancher suffering from a heart attack, Paulsen witnesses the man's death but continues to try to revive the man because of the hope for a miracle that binds Paulsen and the man's wife as they wait for the hospital helicopter to arrive. The man's death, particularly his eyes in the moment of his death, haunt Paulsen beyond this incident. When the time comes for Brian to experience the death of the pilot by heart attack in Hatchet, Paulsen draws on his personal experiences with the rancher to give the scene realistic detail. The connection between fiction and reality is reflected in the challenges of the text. To help students access Paulsen's reflections on the writing process, use the following ideas to provide scaffolded instruction for a close reading of the more complex features of this text.
	ACT Features	<p>Organization - The narrative about the rancher is framed at the beginning and end of the text by Paulsen's later experience of writing Hatchet. The flashback, or the interruption of chronological order in the narrative to show an earlier event, provides readers with a greater understanding of Paulsen's writing process discussed in the frame.</p> <p>Connection of Ideas - Author Gary Paulsen describes a connection between fiction and reality. Although Hatchet is not an autobiography, Paulsen calls upon an autobiographical experience to help him write a scene in Hatchet because he wants his fictional book "to be real." The idea that fiction may tell larger truths that are not based on facts may be challenging for some readers.</p> <p>Prior Knowledge - The structure of emergency services based on volunteers in large rural areas and the smell of methane that foreshadows the death of the rancher may be unfamiliar to some students.</p>
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Excerpt Lexile®	1,230L
	Full-text Lexile®	1,230L
	Word Count	854
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Central or Main Idea; Greek and Latin Affixes and Roots
	Close Read Prompt	Reread the excerpt from Guts: The True Stories Behind Hatchet and the Brian Books, stating the central idea of the text and at least three details that support it. Note how the author uses language, particularly words with Greek and Latin roots and affixes, such as "catastrophic." How does this contribute to or support the central idea? Then, use your understanding of the central idea to describe what can happen when life changes direction. Remember to write clearly, using complete sentences and supporting your ideas with evidence from the text.
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Informative/Explanatory

Island of the Blue Dolphins

AUTHOR	Name	Scott O'Dell
	Gender	Male
	Nationality	American
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1960
	Literature / Informational	Literature
	Genre	Fiction
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	This excerpt from <i>Island of the Blue Dolphins</i> is set on an isolated island off the coast of California. After having wounded the leader of the dog pack that killed her brother, Karana follows the big gray dog to ensure his death. However, upon finding him alive and vulnerable, Karana changes her plan and nurses the dog back to health. The pair form the beginning of an unlikely friendship, and the text reveals Karana's conflicted feelings regarding the dog she later names Rontu. To help students understand Karana's actions, use the following ideas to provide scaffolded instruction for a close reading of the more complex features of this text.
	ACT Features	Genre - Readers will need to make inferences to understand why Karana decides to nurse the dog rather than kill it as Karana, the first-person narrator, "cannot say." Readers may consider how the dog's survival or death may affect Karana's life on the island.
		Prior Knowledge - Native American island life off the coast of California during the 1800s will be unfamiliar to most students.
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Excerpt Lexile®	940L
	Full-text Lexile®	1,000L
	Word Count	1,052
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Point of View
	Close Read Prompt	<i>Island of the Blue Dolphins</i> is written using first-person point of view, and everything we learn about the events in the story come from the observations of Karana, the main character. In third-person omniscient point of view, however, the narrator of the story is an observer rather than a character, and reveals the thoughts and feelings of every character in the story. How would telling Karana's encounter with the wild dog from the third person omniscient point of view reveal more information about the thoughts and feelings of both characters? Use your understanding of text evidence and point of view to arrive at your answer. Support your writing with evidence from the text.
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Informative/Explanatory

Dragonwings

AUTHOR	Name	Laurence Yep
	Gender	Male
	Nationality	Chinese-American
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1975
	Literature / Informational	Literature
	Genre	Fiction
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	This excerpt from <i>Dragonwings</i> is set in China during the early twentieth century. Moon Shadow, the story's narrator, describes life on a rice farm with his mother and grandmother after his father has gone to America to work. The first-person point of view and the cultural nature of the novel are reflected in the challenges of the text. To help students understand the narrator and his culture, use the following ideas to provide scaffolded instruction for a close reading of the more complex features of this text.
	ACT Features	<p>Sentence Structure - The sentences are complex and include memoir-like sensory detail.</p> <p>Specific Vocabulary - Terms that reference Chinese and English history and mythology, such as the Tang Dynasty, Henry VIII, Elizabeth I, and phoenix, may present a challenge to some readers.</p> <p>Prior Knowledge - Many references to the Chinese culture, such as visiting the temple, burning incense for the father, and belonging to a clan, and the Chinese point of view, such as referring to America as the "Land of the Golden Mountain" and white Americans as "white demons," may be unfamiliar to some students.</p>
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Excerpt Lexile®	1,140L
	Full-text Lexile®	870L
	Word Count	989
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Connotation and Denotation
	Close Read Prompt	In <i>Dragonwings</i> , how do the word choices the author makes have an impact on the reader's understanding of Moon Shadow and his world? What do they reveal about Moon Shadow's point of view? Use your understanding of connotation and denotation to explain Moon Shadow's thoughts and feelings. Support your writing with evidence from the text.
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Informative/Explanatory

The Father of Chinese Aviation

AUTHOR	Name	Rebecca Maksel
	Gender	Female
	Nationality	American
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	2008
	Literature / Informational	Informational
	Genre	Magazine Article
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	<p>“The Father of Chinese Aviation,” a magazine article, introduces readers to Feng Ru, a Chinese immigrant to the United States, who later returns to his homeland and becomes China’s “Aviation Pioneer.” Undaunted by various obstacles and misfortunes, the secretive and self-taught engineer succeeds in taking flight in his bi-plane over Oakland, California, in 1909. In 1911, he returns to China, taking the parts for a plane with him and hoping to become the first aviator to launch from Chinese soil. While Feng Ru meets this goal, he is tragically killed in 1912 when his flying machine falls to the ground during an aerial exhibition. Feng Ru’s adventuresome spirit and dedication to making advances in the aviation industry are reflected in the challenges of the text.</p>
	ACT Features	<p>Organization - The timeline begins with Feng Ru’s 1909 flight in Oakland before flashing back to his arrival in the United States and the studies and work that lead up to that 1909 flight. Then, the text picks up in 1909 and carries the information forward to Feng Ru’s death in 1912. A timeline of events may help readers follow the chronological history.</p>
		<p>Genre - Because the text is a biography, the author strings together many of the details of Feng Ru’s life and work through a variety of quoted sources, including newspaper articles and historians. Students might find these different voices confusing or have difficulty finding cohesiveness in the text.</p>
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Excerpt Lexile®	1,330L
	Full-text Lexile®	1,330L
	Word Count	976
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Textual Evidence
	Close Read Prompt	The central idea of a text tells you what it is mostly about. The supporting details help you understand the central idea. Use your understanding of textual evidence to help you find the central idea that emerges in the article “The Father of Aviation.” Provide two or more pieces of evidence from the text to support your idea. Is the idea explicit in the text, or did you need to infer it?
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Argumentative

I Never Had It Made: An Autobiography of Jackie Robinson

AUTHOR	Name	Jackie Robinson
	Gender	Male
	Nationality	American
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1972
	Literature / Informational	Informational
	Genre	Autobiography
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	In this excerpt from I Never Had It Made, Jackie Robinson gives firsthand reflection regarding the causes of his success as the first African American baseball player in the major leagues. Robinson attributes the manager of the Brooklyn Dodgers Branch Rickey, African American fans, children, and his wife with the success of the “noble [social] experiment.” Through his own words, Robinson shares his thoughts regarding the connection between money and social change, as well. To help students understand Robinson’s ideas regarding social change, use the following ideas to provide scaffolded instruction for a close reading of the more complex features of this text.
	ACT Features	<p>Organization - The structure of the text is primarily cause-and-effect. Robinson begins by citing one of the most important moments in his life: playing in the World Series as the first African American player. Then, he reflects on the people and events that cause this historic moment to take place.</p> <p>Sentence Structure - Sentences are complex and contain figurative language, such as “I was proud to be in the hurricane eye,” “make the turnstiles hum,” and “Money is America’s God.” In many cases, identifying the commonalities between items being compared directly or indirectly will help readers with understanding.</p> <p>Prior Knowledge - Jackie Robinson, baseball, and racial issues of the time period may be unfamiliar to some students.</p>
	Excerpt Lexile®	940L
	Full-text Lexile®	1,130L
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Word Count	1,068
	Skill Lessons	Informational Text Structure; Figurative Language; Media
	Close Read Prompt	<p>“View the video clip “Behind Jackie Robinson’s Legacy”: http://www.nbcnews.com/video/meet-the-press/51534618#51534618</p> <p>Compare and contrast the news broadcast video “Behind Jackie Robinson’s Legacy” and the excerpt from I Never Had It Made. How are the two alike, and how do they differ? Be sure to comment on how each medium is structured and the kinds of language each one features. Does figurative language play a role in both? If not, does any element of the video fill the same role as the figures of speech in the text? How do the video and text support the overall message of what constitutes a turning point in life? Support your writing with evidence from the text and video.”</p>
READER AND TASKS	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Informative/Explanatory

Warriors Don't Cry

AUTHOR	Name	Melba Pattillo Beals
	Gender	Female
	Nationality	American
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1994
	Literature / Informational	Informational
	Genre	Autobiography
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	In this excerpt from <i>Warriors Don't Cry</i> , Melba Pattillo Beals gives a firsthand account of her history-making attendance at the formerly all-white Central High School in Arkansas following the Supreme Court's decision that racial segregation is unconstitutional. Beals recalls with vivid details the events of being escorted to school by federal troops sent by President Eisenhower. Through her own words, Beals relays the mood of the scene as well as the reactions of the students and their parents and community members. To help students understand the momentous historical nature of this scene, use the following ideas to provide scaffolded instruction for a close reading of the more complex features of this text.
	ACT Features	<p>Genre - In many ways, the details of the text focus as much on the mood of the scene as on the sequence of events. For example, "There was an eerie hush over the crowd, not unlike the way I'd seen folks behave outside the home of the deceased just before a funeral." In addition, Beals contrasts her own point of view of events with the way she perceives the points of view of the crying adults. For instance, " I wondered why they were crying and just at that moment when I had more hope of staying alive and keeping safe than I had since the integration began." To fully understand the narrator's point of view, students need to examine the author's word choice and focus.</p> <p>Prior Knowledge - The Civil Rights movement, the National Guard, and heightened racial tensions during the period may be unfamiliar to some readers.</p>
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Excerpt Lexile®	890L
	Full-text Lexile®	1,000L
	Word Count	989
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Informational Text Structure
	Close Read Prompt	Identify the central idea of the excerpt and describe how the author's use of a sequential text structure helps her develop that central idea effectively. Then choose two to three paragraphs from the text and explain the essential role that each one plays in the text structure. What does each paragraph contribute to the sequence of events that Beals describes? How do your selected paragraphs add memorable facts and details to her account of this turning point in her life? What conclusion can you draw about her experience? Be sure to support your ideas with textual evidence.
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Informative/Explanatory

The Story of My Life

AUTHOR	Name	Helen Keller
	Gender	Female
	Nationality	American
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1903
	Literature / Informational	Informational
	Genre	Autobiography
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	In this excerpt from <i>The Story of My Life</i> , Helen Keller, both blind and deaf, gives a firsthand account of the day that Anne Mansfield Sullivan, an important teacher, comes into her life. Keller recalls with vivid details how Sullivan helps Keller understand the connection between words and objects. Through her own words, Keller shares how the ability to communicate with others moves her from the darkness of loneliness, anger, and bitterness to the light of joy, eagerness, and expectation. To help students understand Keller's transformation, use the following ideas to provide scaffolded instruction for a close reading of the more complex features of this text.
	ACT Features	Connection of Ideas - Keller equates the inability to communicate with others with "a dense fog, ... a tangible white darkness" and the ability to communicate with others with "light." To understand the extended metaphor, readers must consider how a blind woman trapped in literal darkness sees light when she understands that objects have names and that this understanding will allow her to communicate with others.
		Sentence Structure - Sentences are complex and contain figurative language and challenging vocabulary. For example, "Anger and bitterness had preyed upon me continually for weeks and a deep languor had succeeded this passionate struggle." Readers should think about the ways in which figurative comparisons share common traits to understand the author's meaning and use context clues to help them decipher unfamiliar vocabulary.
Prior Knowledge - The author's use of Biblical allusion may present a challenge for students. Keller alludes to the miracle of "Aaron's rod, with flowers" from Numbers 17:17.		
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Excerpt Lexile®	1,050L
	Full-text Lexile®	1,090L
	Word Count	1,064
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Connotation and Denotation
	Close Read Prompt	Keller experiences a change of emotions between paragraphs 6 and 8. How does the author's use of connotation in the text help the reader understand her change in feelings? How does her change relate to the central idea in the text? Support your writing with evidence from the text. Be sure to include words with positive and negative connotations from the paragraphs as textual evidence.
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Informative/Explanatory

Eleven

AUTHOR	Name	Sandra Cisneros
	Gender	Female
	Nationality	American
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1991
	Literature / Informational	Literature
	Genre	Short Story
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	The short story “Eleven” is set in a school classroom on the day of Rachel’s eleventh birthday. Rachel, the story’s narrator, describes her feelings of embarrassment and powerlessness when the teacher insists that an ugly, smelly, red sweater left in the coat room for a month belongs to Rachel. Rachel reflects that birthdays are the cumulative sum of all one’s years. Although one may be eleven, she may act three at any given time when she feels sad and needs to cry. The first-person point of view and the reflective nature of the text contribute to its complexity. To help students understand the narrator’s theory about birthdays, use the following ideas to provide scaffolded instruction for a close reading of the more complex features of this text.
	ACT Features	<p>Organization - The narrator begins by explaining her theory regarding the cumulative effect of birthdays. Then she offers an anecdote from her eleventh birthday as proof that her theory is accurate.</p> <p>Genre - Although the text is told from Rachel’s first-person point of view, the beginning of the text makes use of the second-person you. This technique helps the narrator convey the idea that the cumulative effect of birthdays is a universal truth for readers as well as herself. The narrator also makes use of the pronoun they in the opening lines, which has no antecedent: “What they don’t understand about birthdays and what they never tell you.” Readers will need to infer the identity of “they.”</p> <p>Sentence Structure - The narrator’s sentences are conversational, at times long, poetic, and flowing, and at times fragmented. Readers may benefit by reading the story aloud.</p>
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Excerpt Lexile®	1,070L
	Full-text Lexile®	1,070L
	Word Count	1,195
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Story Structure; Figurative Language
	Close Read Prompt	In “Eleven,” Sandra Cisneros focuses the narrative on an embarrassing moment in the life of the main character. Analyze how that choice contributes to the overall development of the plot. What do we learn about Rachel through her description of this event that we might not otherwise know? How does the way Cisneros structures the story help build sympathy for Rachel? How do figures of speech such as similes contribute to the descriptions of Rachel and reveal her ideas about her world? How does the event support Rachel’s theory that people are all the ages they’ve ever been? Support your writing with evidence from the text. Be sure to cite specific examples of similes and other figures of speech that contribute to your ideas.
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Informative/Explanatory

The Pigman

AUTHOR	Name	Paul Zindel
	Gender	Male
	Nationality	American
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1968
	Literature / Informational	Literature
	Genre	Fiction
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	These excerpts from The Pigman are narrated by two different characters. John narrates chapter 5 as he and Lorraine visit Mr. Pignati's home and trick Mr. Pignati, a lonely widow, into donating money to a fake charity. Lorraine narrates chapter 6 as she and John wait to meet Mr. Pignati at the Baron Park Zoo. The challenges of the text are reflected in the alternating first-person points of view. To help students understand each of the narrators and the changes that take place within them, use the following ideas to provide scaffolded instruction for a close reading of the more complex features of this text.
	ACT Features	<p>Organization - The first-person narrator of chapter 5 is not identified by name until chapter 6 when Lorraine says, "John had called the Pigman and made arrangements for us to meet him in front of the zoo at ten o'clock in the morning." Readers must infer that Lorraine, first mentioned by John in chapter 5 ("Yes," Lorraine said. "We really shouldn't have stayed this long."), is the first-person narrator of chapter 6.</p> <p>Connection of Ideas - The change in John and Lorraine's feelings and behavior toward Mr. Pignati between the chapters may be confusing for some readers. Readers should think about Mr. Pignati and why continued contact with him might appeal to John and Lorraine.</p> <p>Sentence Structure - Much of the text is written in dialogue and reflects the sounds and patterns of speech. For example, when John says, "No . . . we didn't see . . . your pigs," the ellipses indicate long pauses in speech.</p>
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Excerpt Lexile®	750L
	Full-text Lexile®	950L
	Word Count	1,203
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Point of View
	Close Read Prompt	How do the two points of view from which The Pigman is narrated help you to better understand the characters in the story? How is this more effective than if the story were told from only one point of view? Give specific examples, and support your writing with evidence from the text.
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Informative/Explanatory

The Road Not Taken

AUTHOR	Name	Robert Frost
	Gender	Male
	Nationality	American
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1915
	Literature / Informational	Literature
	Genre	Poem
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	In “The Road Not Taken,” Robert Frost explores the idea of life’s choices and their effects on a man’s life as the speaker ponders which of two roads to take while on a walk in a yellow wood. Students are asked to analyze the poem and to make inferences based on rhyme, structure, figurative language, and imagery as they compare and contrast the poem’s delivery in print and audio. To help students master these skills, use the following ideas to provide scaffolded instruction for a close reading of the more complex features of this text.
	ACT Features	<p>Connection of Ideas - Some readers will need help making inferences based on events described in the poem and on poetic devices such as rhyme, language, and imagery. For example, readers must connect the speaker’s single choice in the wood with its lasting effect on the speaker’s life.</p> <p>Sentence Structure - The vocabulary is simple, but readers must use the punctuation to read the lines as units of meaning rather than as single lines. Some readers will need help understanding how the punctuation affects meaning, as well.</p> <p>Specific Vocabulary - Some archaic language, such as “trodden” and “hence” may present a challenge for readers.</p>
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Excerpt Lexile®	N/A
	Full-text Lexile®	N/A
	Word Count	144
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Poetic Structure; Poetic Elements; Media
	Close Read Prompt	How does Robert Frost’s use of poetic structure and poetic elements in “The Road Not Taken” support the poem’s meaning in both the print and audio versions of the poem? Explain what you believe the poem means, and how the poem’s meaning is shaped by at least one aspect of poetic structure and at least one poetic element. Examine whether or not you experience these differently when you listen to the audio version, and whether hearing the poem read aloud changes your understanding of its meaning. Introduce your response with a thesis statement, and support your ideas with clearly organized details and quotations from the text.
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Informative/Explanatory



UNIT 2: ANCIENT REALMS

Grade 6 Unit 2 moves students further along toward their grade level goal of proficiently reading and comprehending stories, poems, and literary nonfiction “in the grades 6-8 text complexity band, with scaffolding as needed in the high end of the range.” The unit balances five informational texts with six literary texts, all of them with a connection to the unit theme of ancient cultures. The quantitative dimensions (as measured by the Lexile® Framework) of the texts in this unit fall within the recommended quantitative band for Grades 6-8 (with one exception). All selections in the unit demonstrate qualitative dimensions, reader characteristics, and task demands that make them accessible to and appropriate for growing the skills of sixth grade readers.

The literature selections in this unit include fiction, fables, myths, and poetry. These selections represent a gradual increase of text complexity, intertextual references, and demands on the life experience and cultural/literary knowledge of young readers. The First Read lessons that accompany selections with very high demand on cultural/literary knowledge, such as the excerpts from *The Lightning Thief* and *Black Ships Before Troy*, are scaffolded with Build Background activities that develop and engage students’ knowledge of relevant topics.

The recommended full-text read for this unit is *The Lightning Thief*, a novel in the fantasy genre in which characters from ancient mythology interact with a preadolescent protagonist in a contemporary setting. While the quantitative dimensions of this excerpt are lower than others in the unit, this selection serves as an accessible, familiar introduction to the more archaic Greek mythology selections that are the focus for the rest of the unit. The Skill lessons that accompany *The Lightning Thief* address the unit task demands of analyzing point of view and using textual evidence to support analysis. These task demands, combined with the selection’s complex intertextual references and use of structural elements such as flashback, makes this an important, challenging selection for students.

The informational texts in this unit are excerpts aimed at providing historical, scientific, religious, and artistic context for the literary texts. Certain of these texts, such as the biographical article “Hatshepsut: His Majesty, Herself” appear, in order, prior to literary texts with high cultural knowledge demands, introducing key vocabulary and cultural concepts. The excerpt from *A Short Walk Around the Pyramids & Through the World of Art*, one of the Common Core Appendix B text exemplars in this unit, connects the unit’s texts on ancient Egypt to an artistic tradition. Though it falls within grade-level quantitative dimensions, the complex sentence structure and academic writing may be difficult for readers, especially English learners, and so the First Read lesson accompanying this unit is scaffolded with additional grammar support.

Analyzing informational text elements and central or main ideas are the first task demands introduced in this unit. Students master these skills in the first part of the unit, progressing to analyzing argument and claim, before moving onto lessons which focus on literary elements. Though its qualitative and quantitative dimensions are similar to other texts in the unit, the task demands associated with the final informational text, an excerpt from *The Hero Schilemann: The Dreamer Who Dug for Troy*, are more challenging, as students analyze the author’s point of view and use of figurative language in supporting and developing her ideas.

Hatshepsut: His Majesty, Herself

AUTHOR	Name	Catherine M. Andronik
	Gender	Female
	Nationality	American
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	2001
	Literature / Informational	Informational
	Genre	Informational
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	This excerpt from Hatshepsut, His Majesty, Herself describes how Hatshepsut, a royal daughter, became a pharaoh in ancient Egypt. The excerpt tells about her life in the royal court in Egypt and the duties and role she had to learn. When all of the male heirs to the throne died, it left a void that Hatshepsut filled. First, she acted as regent for the male heir, who was a small child. Then, after seven years, she proclaimed herself pharaoh. Her reign was peaceful and prosperous. She built many monuments. While she was in a man's role, she did not give up her feminine ways. She still wore cosmetics and bracelets. To help students understand the circumstances surrounding Hatshepsut's life and her role as pharaoh, use the following suggestions to provide scaffolded instruction for a close reading of the more complex features of this text:
	ACT Features	Sentence Structure - Sentences are complex. There is a cause and effect pattern to the sentence structure.
		Specific Vocabulary - Some difficult vocabulary may present a challenge to readers. Terms and names are difficult to pronounce and may be unfamiliar to many readers.
		Prior Knowledge - Ancient Egypt and how pharaohs ruled may be unfamiliar to many readers.
	Genre - This is nonfiction and written in a biography format. Remind students that a biography is a true story of a real person's life written by someone else. This biography tells about who Hatshepsut was and how she lived. Review with students the features of a biography, such as chronological order, point of view, historical context, and how the subject is described, either directly or indirectly.	
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Excerpt Lexile®	1,010L
	Full-text Lexile®	N/A
	Word Count	1,415
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Informational Text Elements
	Close Read Prompt	How is a historical figure like Hatshepsut relevant today? In what ways can she be considered an inspiration for both boys and girls? What specific events or situations in Hatshepsut's life does the author use to introduce, illustrate, and elaborate on her character and values? Write a clear and well-organized explanation that examines why Hatshepsut continues to be relevant. Develop the topic and support your ideas with facts, details, quotations or other evidence from the text.
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Informative/Explanatory

Book of the Dead

AUTHOR	Name	Ancient Egyptian Tradition
	Gender	
	Nationality	
	Translator	E.A. Wallis Budge
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	circa 1550 BCE
	Literature / Informational	Informational
	Genre	Funerary Text
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	The Book of the Dead is the title of a collection of funerary texts composed by ancient Egyptian scribes. The texts were part of Egyptian burial customs. The hymns, spells, and prayers found in the book provided guidance to the newly dead for negotiating the important journey to the afterlife. The journey was often difficult so these texts were important to make it easier to reach the afterlife. The “Negative Confession” was recited just before a dead person’s heart was weighed on the scales of the hall of Ma’at. To help students understand these concepts, use the following suggestions to provide scaffolded instruction for a close reading of the more complex features of this text:
	ACT Features	<p>Organization - The text is a series of, or list of, negative confessions. They are actions that the newly dead has NOT done. Thus it means the newly dead led a good life and can gain admission to the afterlife.</p> <p>Sentence Structure - Sentences are complex, but follow a pattern. The pattern is the greeting, Hail, the name of god, the place where god lives, and then the action that the newly dead did not do.</p> <p>Specific Vocabulary - Some difficult vocabulary may present a challenge to readers. Terms and names are difficult. Some words are not defined within context.</p> <p>Prior Knowledge - Ancient Egypt, burial rituals, and the afterlife may be unfamiliar.</p>
	Excerpt Lexile®	1,010L
	Full-text Lexile®	N/A
Word Count	660	
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Central or Main Idea
	Close Read Prompt	Reread confessions 11 to 42 of “The Negative Confession.” Analyze the details, choosing eight confessions, with details that together suggest a similar central idea. Summarize the central idea in your own words, and use textual evidence that supports your thinking.
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Informative/Explanatory

The Book of Exodus

AUTHOR	Name	Revised Standard Version Bible	
	Gender		
	Nationality		
	Translator		
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	circa 1400 BCE	
	Literature / Informational	Informational	
	Genre	Religious Text	
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	The Book of Exodus chronicles the Israelites' escape from slavery in Egypt. It tells of their difficult passage through the wilderness to the land of Canaan. Moses led his people on this journey. Once his people were safe, Moses climbed Mount Sinai, where God spoke to him from the heavens. The two established a covenant. The two stone tablets that Moses brought down from the mountain were inscribed with the Ten Commandments. The commandments went on to become the basis for Judaic law. To help students understand the challenges Moses faced, use the following suggestions to provide scaffolded instruction for a close reading of the more complex features of this text:	
	ACT Features		Prior Knowledge - The story of Moses and the Israelites' escape may be unfamiliar to some readers.
			Sentence Structure - Sentences are complex. Focus students' attention on the dialogue, how it is presented and what it reveals about the characters and events.
		Specific Vocabulary - Some difficult vocabulary may present a challenge to readers. Terms and names are difficult.	
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Excerpt Lexile®	1,070L	
	Full-text Lexile®	N/A	
	Word Count	1,611	
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Informational Text Elements	
	Close Read Prompt	Use your understanding of informational text elements to determine how individuals, ideas, and events interact in the Book of Exodus. Choose an important individual, event, or idea from the text and demonstrate how one influences the other elements. How does this interaction ultimately lead to the delivery of the Ten Commandments? Cite specific textual evidence to support your ideas.	
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Informative/Explanatory	

A Short Walk Around the Pyramids & Through the World of Art

AUTHOR	Name	Philip M. Isaacson	
	Gender	Male	
	Nationality	American	
	Translator		
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1993	
	Literature / Informational	Informational	
	Genre	Informational	
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	A Short Walk Around the Pyramids & Through the World of Art is an informational text that describes how artists look at things. It describes the pyramids through an artist's viewpoint and vision. The author shows readers how to look at the pyramids and several sculptures in the way an artist would. To help students understand the ways art can inform and inspire viewers, use the following suggestions to provide scaffolded instruction for a close reading of the more complex features of this text:	
	ACT Features		Genre - This essay compares the Pyramids of Giza to landmark sculptures from various cultures. Although it provides information about the artwork, it also incorporates a subjective viewpoint. Some readers may need help to make the distinction between factual information and the author's opinion.
			Specific Vocabulary - Some difficult vocabulary may present a challenge to readers. Proper names are difficult to pronounce.
			Prior Knowledge - Artistic terms and methods may be unfamiliar to some readers and require additional explanation.
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Excerpt Lexile®	1,120L	
	Full-text Lexile®	1,110L	
	Word Count	939	
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Arguments and Claims	
	Close Read Prompt	Isaacson makes the argument that the pyramids at Giza serve as timeless instructors to the masses about the elements of great art. Do you find Isaacson's argument about the qualities and impact of the pyramids persuasive? Why or why not? Explain Isaacson's argument, including the relationship between his claim, reasons, and evidence. Use your understanding of argument and claim to evaluate Isaacson's text. Support your writing with evidence from the text.	
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Informative/Explanatory	

Aesop's Fables

AUTHOR	Name	Aesop
	Gender	Male
	Nationality	Greece
	Translator	George Fyler Townsend
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	circa 600 BCE
	Literature / Informational	Literature
	Genre	Fable
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	Aesop's Fables is the title of a collection of hundreds of short fables or tales. These fables are full of wisdom, wit, and charm. Some of the fables have an explicit moral, or message, intended to teach a lesson. In others, where a moral is not explicitly stated, it is up to the reader to figure out the message of the tale. The fables of Aesop, written centuries ago, are still popular and relevant today. To help students understand the ideas expressed and inferred from these fables, use the following suggestions to provide scaffolded instruction for a close reading of the more complex features of this text:
	ACT Features	<p>Sentence Structure – Even though the fables are short, many of the sentences are long and complex. The author uses dialogue.</p> <p>Purpose – Readers must focus on the characters, their actions, and the sequence of events in order to best understand the lessons, or morals, expressed in the fables. Where a moral is not directly stated, readers must infer what the message of the fable might be.</p>
	QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Excerpt Lexile®
	Full-text Lexile®	N/A
	Word Count	808
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Theme
	Close Read Prompt	Though written centuries ago, how do the themes of Aesop's fables continue to inspire and inform readers even today? Consider the themes in the fables you have read, along with the thoughts, words, and actions of the characters, and the author's use of personification to support and express themes. Explain how these are still relevant to an audience of readers today. Respond by developing and supporting your ideas with textual evidence from at least three of the fables you have read.
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Informative/Explanatory

*The Lightning Thief

AUTHOR	Name	Rick Riordan
	Gender	Male
	Nationality	American
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	2005
	Literature / Informational	Literature
	Genre	Fiction
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	The <i>Lightning Thief</i> , a novel by Rick Riordan, is a modern fantasy tale of the Greek gods. Its hero, twelve-year-old Percy Jackson is, unbeknownst to him, the son of Poseidon, God of the Sea. In the excerpt from chapter 3, Percy reflects on the odd things that seem to happen to him wherever he goes and questions his mother about his real father. To help students understand Percy—who he is and how he feels about himself and his life—use the following suggestions to provide scaffolded instruction for a close reading of the more complex features of this text:
	ACT Features	<p>Genre - The <i>Lightning Thief</i> is a contemporary fantasy, in which the world of Greek gods is recreated in modern times. This genre may be challenging for some readers.</p> <p>Prior Knowledge – The references to various figures in Greek mythology, such as Poseidon and Hercules, may be unfamiliar to some readers.</p> <p>Connection of Ideas – The element of flashback—the interruption in a chronological narrative that tells about something that happened before that point in the story or before that story began—maybe difficult for some readers.</p>
	Excerpt Lexile®	740L
	Full-text Lexile®	740L
Word Count	1,181	
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Textual Evidence; Point of View
	Close Read Prompt	Because <i>The Lightning Thief</i> is told from Percy’s first-person point of view, the reader starts out just as much in the dark about what might be happening in his life as he is. Write an essay that analyzes how that fact affects the way readers experience the story. How does this point of view build drama and suspense? How do inferences help the reader gain an understanding of events that even Percy might not have? Support your analysis with textual evidence.
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Informative/Explanatory

*Suggested Full-text Study

Perseus

AUTHOR	Name	Robert Hayden
	Gender	Male
	Nationality	American
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1966
	Literature / Informational	Literature
	Genre	Poem
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	<p>“Perseus” offers a new perspective on the Greek mythical hero. The poet, Robert Hayden, explores Perseus's feelings as he completes the task he has been given by the goddess, Athena. Reflecting on his deed, Perseus draws a conclusion about his future and how the deed has changed him. To help students understand the character of Perseus and the complexity of his emotions, use the following suggestions to provide scaffolded instruction for a close reading of the more complex features of this text:</p>
	ACT Features	<p>Genre –The elements of poetry may be unfamiliar to some readers. Students may need help understanding the images the poet uses to create a vivid picture of Perseus and what he is feeling.</p>
		<p>Sentence Structure – The complex structure of the poem may interfere in students’ ability to access meaning. Break down the information in each stanza, focusing students’ attention on what is revealed about the character of Perseus in each line.</p>
		<p>Specific Vocabulary –The complex words and phrases in this poem may be difficult for some readers. Encourage them to use context clues to determine the meanings of these and other words. They may also consult general reference materials, both print and digital, to find the pronunciation of a word or to determine or clarify its exact meaning.</p>
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Excerpt Lexile®	N/A
	Full-text Lexile®	N/A
	Word Count	78
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Tone; Word Meaning
	Close Read Prompt	<p>More than anything, “Perseus” shares with readers the inner struggle of a hero who finds that he is perhaps more like his bloodthirsty enemy than he realized. Trace the tone conveyed throughout the poem. How does the tone of the poem help readers better understand Perseus's conflict? How does the poet's choice of words and phrases, in both their denotative and connotative meanings, support this tone and help readers compare and contrast both sides of a hero? Support your writing with specific examples from the text.</p>
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Informative/Explanatory

Heroes Every Child Should Know: Perseus

AUTHOR	Name	Hamilton Wright Mabie
	Gender	Male
	Nationality	American
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1914
	Literature / Informational	Literature
	Genre	Mythology
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	This excerpt from Heroes Every Child Should Know: Perseus describes Perseus's quest to cut off the head of the Gorgon Medusa. Perseus is sent on this quest by the goddess Athene, who considers Medusa her mortal enemy. Perseus is aided on his journey by the god Hermes, as well as the mythical figures Atlas and the nymphs. To help students understand the character of Perseus and the purpose of his mission, use the following suggestions to provide scaffolded instruction for a close reading of the more complex features of this text:
	ACT Features	Genre – The text belongs to the genre of mythology, specifically Greek mythology. Remind students that a myth is a traditional story, usually of unknown authorship, that answers basic questions about the world.
		Specific Vocabulary – Some vocabulary is specific to Greek mythology, i.e. Gorgons, Nymphs, and Hades and may need explanation.
	Prior Knowledge – The references to various figures in Greek mythology, such as Zeus, Athene, and Atlas, may be unfamiliar to some readers.	
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Excerpt Lexile®	950L
	Full-text Lexile®	N/A
	Word Count	2,459
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Compare and Contrast; Plot
	Close Read Prompt	Compare and contrast how the shared plot events in the poem “Perseus” and the myth Heroes Every Child Should Know: Perseus affect the character of Perseus, as well as how he changes as a result. In your response, analyze what Perseus learns about himself in each text, along with how that realization impacts the resolution shared with readers. Remember to support your writing with evidence from the text.
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Informative/Explanatory

Black Ships Before Troy: The Story of the Iliad

AUTHOR	Name	Rosemary Sutcliff
	Gender	Female
	Nationality	British
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1993
	Literature / Informational	Literature
	Genre	Fiction
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	This excerpt from <i>Black Ships Before Troy</i> tells the story of the origins of the Trojan War. The goddess of discord, Eris, arrives uninvited at a wedding feast. She offers a golden apple to the fairest of the goddesses present, all of whom argue over which is the most beautiful. When Paris declares that the goddess Helen is the fairest, his decision and subsequent actions lead to a conflict between the Greeks and the Trojans. To help students understand the events leading to the Trojan War, use the following suggestions to provide scaffolded instruction for a close reading of the more complex features of this text:
	ACT Features	<p>Prior Knowledge - The text draws readers into the story of the Trojan War by visiting its earliest origins and providing a glimpse into the mix of passions and foreordained events that exploded into the famous conflict between the Greeks and the Trojans. The world of ancient Greek mythology and the long-ago war might be unfamiliar to some readers.</p> <p>Organization - In the middle of the text, the action moves forward twenty years. This jump in time may be difficult for some students to follow. Explain how the events that occur in the beginning and end of the text are connected, and how the middle passage advances the story's plot.</p>
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Excerpt Lexile®	1,150L
	Full-text Lexile®	1,300L
	Word Count	973
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Story Structure
	Close Read Prompt	<i>Black Ships Before Troy</i> is essentially a series of three events: a wedding between a goddess and a mortal, a challenge that an envious goddess poses to three more powerful goddesses, and a judgment made by a mortal prince/herdsman. Analyze how the structure of the text helps connect and develop these three events. How does one event inform the other? In your analysis, give examples of how specific parts of the text connect and contribute to the development of the plot. Remember to support your ideas with textual evidence throughout your writing.
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Informative/Explanatory

Mythology: Timeless Tales of Gods and Heroes

AUTHOR	Name	Edith Hamilton
	Gender	Female
	Nationality	German-American
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1942
	Literature / Informational	Literature
	Genre	Mythology
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	This excerpt from Mythology: Timeless Tales of Gods and Heroes tells a portion of the Trojan War story. This myth combines a human story with supernatural elements. Students will draw upon their understanding of the myth genre as well as prior knowledge of the Trojan War. The abstract nature of the myth genre and the use of higher-level vocabulary will present a challenge to the reader. To help students understand this pivotal event of the Trojan War, use the following suggestions to provide scaffolded instruction for a close reading of the more complex features of this text:
	ACT Features	<p>Prior Knowledge - Students must be able to access prior knowledge about the Trojan War from earlier texts in this unit. For those students having difficulty, review the events leading up to the war from previous selections and background building activities relating to this topic that students have completed.</p> <p>Specific Vocabulary - Complex words and phrases may be difficult for some readers. Encourage them to use context clues to determine the meanings of these and other words. They may also consult general reference materials, both print and digital, to find the pronunciation of a word or to determine or clarify its exact meaning.</p> <p>Connection of Ideas - In a myth, the motives of gods and humans are explored. Students may struggle with the idea that mythological beings can have motives similar to humans.</p>
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Excerpt Lexile®	960L
	Full-text Lexile®	1,040L
	Word Count	1,396
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Media
	Close Read Prompt	Choose one of the video versions of the Trojan horse story and explain which experience you preferred: reading the story in Edith Hamilton's text, or watching it in the video version you selected. Discuss elements such as plot, character, and narrator (or the absence of a narrator), along with aspects of each medium that affected how you experienced the story (for example, description or style in the text versus acting and costumes in the video version). Develop your ideas with relevant facts, concrete details, and examples, and be sure to use precise language to explain how aspects of each medium helped shape your reaction. Use your understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of different media, along with clear reasons and evidence from each version, to support your response.
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Informative/Explanatory

The Hero Schliemann: The Dreamer Who Dug for Troy

AUTHOR	Name	Laura Amy Schlitz
	Gender	Female
	Nationality	American
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	2006
	Literature / Informational	Informational
	Genre	Informational
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	This excerpt from <i>The Hero Schliemann: The Dreamer Who Dug for Troy</i> describes how Heinrich Schliemann, a businessman and archaeologist, discovered the ancient city of Troy. Thrilled by the Greek stories of <i>The Iliad</i> and <i>The Odyssey</i> as a boy, Schliemann longed to find the ancient city that was mentioned in the stories. At the age of 46, he set out on his quest to locate Troy. To help students understand Schliemann and his work, use the following suggestions to provide scaffolded instruction for a close reading of the more complex features of this text:
	ACT Features	<p>Organization - Understanding how an author organizes ideas in a text helps readers identify relevant evidence to support their arguments and conclusions. The organization of this text may be challenging for some students. The text is organized into two sections: the first section focuses on Schliemann at the dig. The next section tells how Schliemann actually discovered Troy and the "story" he told about his findings.</p> <p>Sentence Structure - Sentences are complex. There is a cause and effect pattern to the sentence structure. The author uses dashes for emphasis and to break up thoughts.</p> <p>Specific Vocabulary - Complex words and phrases may be difficult for some readers. Encourage them to use context clues to determine the meanings of these and other words. They may also consult general reference materials, both print and digital, to find the pronunciation of a word or to determine or clarify its exact meaning. Technical terms used in the field of archeology may be unfamiliar.</p>
	Excerpt Lexile®	950L
	Full-text Lexile®	910L
Word Count	560	
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Author's Purpose and Author's Point of View; Figurative Language
	Close Read Prompt	In <i>The Hero Schliemann: The Dreamer Who Dug for Troy</i> , the author acknowledges Schliemann's limitations as an archaeologist. Identify how the author's choice of facts to describe Schliemann's motivations, instincts, and actions reflects Schliemann's unconventional and often problematic methods of discovery. Include in your response an analysis of how the author uses language, including figurative language, to support her claims about Schliemann's work. How do both the author's choice of facts and use of language support her point of view? Support your writing with evidence from the text.
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Argumentative



UNIT 3: FACING CHALLENGES

Grade 6 Unit 3 continues to develop students' grade level goal of proficiently reading and comprehending stories, poems, and literary nonfiction "in the grades 6-8 text complexity band, with scaffolding as needed in the high end of the range." This unit contains a balance of literature (6) and informational texts (4). The qualitative dimensions, reader characteristics, and task demands of the selections in this unit make it an accessible but appropriately challenging set of texts for sixth grade readers as they move up the staircase of increasing complexity, despite some of the texts falling either above or below the recommended quantitative dimensions (as measured by the Lexile® Framework) for Grades 6-8.

The literary selections in this unit address increasingly sophisticated themes, and their protagonists encounter experiences that will be distinctly different from those of many sixth grade readers (even though several of the protagonists are children or teenagers). As the unit progresses, the life experience and cultural knowledge demands increase. The unit opens with an excerpt from Madeleine L'Engle's *A Wrinkle In Time*, one of three Common Core Appendix B text exemplars in the unit, which places its protagonists in a clearly fantastical situation. As the unit progresses, however, students will encounter protagonists dealing with the Great Depression, widespread racism, and the culture of revolutionary France. Complex sentence structures, non-English terms, high demands on students' cultural and prior knowledge, and archaic vocabulary make selections such as Francisco Jimenez's *The Circuit: Stories from the Life of a Migrant Child* and Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* challenging for students, despite falling below the quantitative band.

Analysis of plot and story structure are key task demands in Unit 3, giving students ample scaffolding toward the unit's Extended Writing Project (Narrative Writing). Levels of analysis become more sophisticated as the unit progresses. The recommended full-text read for this unit, Mildred Taylor's *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, which is also one of this unit's Common Core Appendix B exemplar texts, emphasizes analysis of story structure. (Additionally, because the use of dialect and nonstandard English can be challenging for readers, and especially English learners, the First Read lesson for this selection is also scaffolded with additional grammar support.) By the time students have reached the final literary selections in the unit, they will be prepared to address the more complex ideas of theme and tone and begin to incorporate these elements into their own writing.

The first informational text in this unit is an excerpt from Ji-Li Jiang's memoir, *Red Scarf Girl: A Memoir of the Cultural Revolution*. While the quantitative measures in this excerpt fall below the recommended range, the demand for students' cultural knowledge is high: an understanding of the political context, as well as of the specialized vocabulary in the selection, is useful in comprehension. *I Am an American: A True Story of*

Japanese Internment is a nonfiction text exploring themes that connect to other selections throughout the unit—loyalty, injustice, and how people respond to hardship. Scaffolding in the form of a Build Background research activity in the First Read lesson, additional grammar support, and a Blast activity with related research links help keep this text accessible despite its high quantitative measures.

The task demands in this unit work with the informational text selections to support greater comprehension of challenging texts and by adding depth to students’ analysis of more accessible texts. For example, the accessible sentence structure and language of *Red Scarf Girl* is paired with a sophisticated task demand, analyzing the connotations and denotations of the language in the excerpt to fully understand the subtle messages being directed at Jiang during her childhood in China’s Cultural Revolution. At the other end of the quantitative band, a focus on the central or main idea in the Skill lesson accompanying *Children of the Dust Bowl: The True Story of the School at Weedpatch Camp* ensures that students challenged by the selection’s complex sentence structure and organization have a path through the selection. Students will also master analyzing an author’s point of view in both an informational text and a media piece. By the time students have reached the final informational text in the unit, the pro/con feature “Bullying in Schools,” they will have the tools to approach an analysis of an argument’s claim, evidence, and the language used to support it.

A Wrinkle in Time

AUTHOR	Name	Madeleine L'Engle
	Gender	Female
	Nationality	American
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1962
	Literature / Informational	Literature
	Genre	Fiction
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	In this excerpt from Chapter 7 of <i>A Wrinkle in Time</i> , Meg, Charles Wallace, and Calvin encounter a red-eyed man who communicates telepathically and is capable of mind control. Students are asked to analyze the relationship between character and plot. To help students master this skill, use the following suggestions to provide scaffolded instruction for a close reading of the more complex features of this text:
	ACT Features	<p>Connection of Ideas - To analyze the relationship between character and plot, students must look for the ways in which the decisions and actions of the characters alter or advance the events of the plot and how the characters themselves change in response to events and to one another. Since character and plot are revealed through dialogue and narration, students must be able to connect details and make inferences.</p> <p>Sentence Structure - Much of the red-eyed man's dialogue is not directly attributed to him. Students must infer the speaker from the surrounding dialogue and narration. In addition, several of the sentences in the narration are long and complicated, with multiple clauses and phrases. This may present problems for some students.</p> <p>Specific Vocabulary - Some students may have difficulty with unfamiliar words, words with multiple meanings, and unusual constructions, such as "once ten is ten."</p>
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Excerpt Lexile®	740L
	Full-text Lexile®	740L
	Word Count	1,076
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Plot
	Close Read Prompt	In the chapter excerpt from Madeleine L'Engle's <i>A Wrinkle in Time</i> , the red-eyed man tries to control the minds of Meg, Charles Wallace, and Calvin. In what ways do the children stand up for themselves? How do their responses contribute to the unfolding plot? Explain how the children's determination and courage shape what happens in their confrontation with the mysterious red-eyed man. Maintain a formal style in your explanation, and use clear, precise language to help your readers understand this event in the story. Cite textual evidence to support your ideas.
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Informative/Explanatory

The Monsters Are Due on Maple Street

AUTHOR	Name	Rod Serling
	Gender	Male
	Nationality	American
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1960
	Literature / Informational	Literature
	Genre	Drama
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	Because this excerpt from “The Monsters Are Due on Maple Street” is a script for a teleplay, it may present special challenges for students. In addition, students are asked to make comparisons across media and between texts. Use the following suggestions to provide scaffolded instruction for a close reading of the more complex features of this text:
	ACT Features	Organization - Because this excerpt is from a teleplay, the end product is meant to be viewed, not read. The script is designed to provide producers, directors, and actors with dialogue and to help them determine visual elements such as setting, costuming, facial expressions, and body language. Students may have difficulty integrating the dialogue and the stage directions.
		Genre - Students are asked to compare and contrast different media versions of “The Monsters Are Due on Maple Street” to see how the change in medium creates changes in plot, character, or setting. They are also asked to compare and contrast how the authors of “The Monsters Are Due on Maple Street” and A Wrinkle in Time approach the theme of characters confronting a possible monster from another planet or outer space. To make either of these comparisons, students have to identify and analyze relevant details and make inferences.
		Specific Vocabulary - Some students may have difficulty with figures of speech, such as “walk right over you,” “tip your hand,” or “hanging judge.”
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Excerpt Lexile®	N/A
	Full-text Lexile®	N/A
	Word Count	1,269
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Media; Compare and Contrast
	Close Read Prompt	Compare and contrast the script and television versions of The Monsters Are Due on Maple Street. How are the two alike, and how are they different? At what points does the television version add, delete, or change dialogue or events that appear the script? How does the television version expand on the stage directions? In what ways are these revisions significant or insignificant in developing character, plot, and theme? Support the claim or claims you make in your comparison and contrast with clear reasons and with evidence from both the text and television episode.
	Writing Form	“Short Constructed Response: Argumentative”

Red Scarf Girl: A Memoir of the Cultural Revolution

AUTHOR	Name	Ji-Li Jiang
	Gender	Female
	Nationality	Chinese
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1997
	Literature / Informational	Informational
	Genre	Memoir
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	In this excerpt from Red Scarf Girl, Ji-Li Jiang is being interrogated by people from her father's theater group about her father's landlord past and supposed crimes against the Cultural Revolution. To grasp what is happen to Jiang and to understand her emotions, students must interpret historical and cultural reference and look for deeper more sinister meanings for words and phrases that normally carry mild connotations. Use the following suggestions to provide scaffolded instruction for a close reading of the more complex features of this text:
	ACT Features	<p>Organization - Red Scarf Girl is a memoir. Like many memoirs, it includes dialogue as well as first-person narration. Students need to draw details from both the dialogue and narration to understand the relationships between individuals, events, and ideas.</p> <p>Specific Vocabulary - Many words, such as comrades or study session, had special connotations during the Chinese Cultural Revolution. Students will need to consider these connotations while reading. In addition, the memoir does not always provide exact details about the study session. Students will need to consider the shades of meaning of various words to understand what is happening and how Ji-Li Jiang feels.</p> <p>Prior Knowledge - The focus on Chinese culture during a specific period in history may present special challenges for students. Many students may lack prior knowledge of the Chinese Communist Party and events surrounding the Cultural Revolution.</p>
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Excerpt Lexile®	740L
	Full-text Lexile®	780L
	Word Count	871
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Connotation and Denotation; Informational Text Elements
	Close Read Prompt	Based on the events, facts, and details in the text, what arguments could be made for Ji-Li to condemn her father, and what arguments could be made for her to stand by him? Present at least two reasons for each side. Make sure that each reason is supported by evidence from the text. Quote at least one specific phrase, sentence, or passage from the text, and show how the connotations or denotations support a specific side of the argument. Try to make both sides of the argument as strong and convincing as possible, no matter which side you personally agree with. (You do not have to say which one you agree with.)
	Writing Form	"Short Constructed Response: Argumentative"

I Am An American: A True Story of Japanese Internment

AUTHOR	Name	Jerry Stanley
	Gender	Male
	Nationality	American
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1996
	Literature / Informational	Informational
	Genre	Informational
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	In this excerpt from Chapter 2 of I Am an American: A True Story of Japanese Internment, author Jerry Stanley explores how the fear that Japan might invade the West Coast during World War II led the government to force more 100,000 Japanese Americans into internment camps. To help students understand Stanley’s point of view on how this happened, use the following suggestions to provide scaffolded instruction for a close reading of the more complex features of this text:
	ACT Features	<p>Purpose - Stanley’s overall purpose is to inform and his point of view is one of criticism for the people who acted on false information. To understand the author’s purpose and point of view, students will need to analyze how the author uses organizational structure, words, and images to convey information.</p> <p>Connection of Ideas - The author uses a chronological organization so that students can see how circumstances for the Issei and Nisei changed as events in the war raised new fears. Students will need to trace events and make connections between details in the text in order to understand how and why the government’s and public’s stand on Japanese Americans changed over time. In addition, students are asked to compare and contrast Stanley’s account of events with a video interview with Jimmie Kanaya, a Japanese American who helped his parents move into an internment camp. Students will need to be able to draw connections between these two sources in order to understand how the video adds to their understanding of events.</p> <p>Prior Knowledge - The text assumes a general understanding of the events of World War II, the terms Issei and Nisei, and the geography of the Pacific. Students may lack adequate knowledge in these areas.</p>
	Excerpt Lexile®	1,240L
	Full-text Lexile®	1,180L
Word Count	802	
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Media; Author’s Purpose and Point of View
	Close Read Prompt	Compare and contrast the video interview with Jimmie Kanaya, with the excerpt from I Am an American: A True Story of Japanese Internment. How are the two media similar in their coverage of Japanese American internment, and how do they differ? Be sure to comment on how each medium pursues various purposes and points of view. How do the video and the text shed light on the issue of how to deal with conflict—when to stand up and when to stand down? Support your writing with evidence from the text and video.
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Informative/Explanatory

*Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry

AUTHOR	Name	Mildred D. Taylor
	Gender	Female
	Nationality	American
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1976
	Literature / Informational	Literature
	Genre	Fiction
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	While students may find the vocabulary and sentence structure in this excerpt from Mildred D. Taylor’s <i>Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry</i> accessible, the novel’s story structure and its historic nature may be challenging. To help students get the most out of the story, use the following suggestions to provide scaffolded instruction for a close reading of the more complex features of this text:
	ACT Features	<p>Organization - Taylor structures the text so that it unfolds through a sequence of events that present a conflict and resolution. The problems the Logans and their neighbors face, and the solutions they find, move the plot forward. While nine-year-old Cassie Logan is the narrator, it is through dialogue that plot events are revealed. Students will need to be able to ask and answer who, what, where, and how question to analyze plot events and the story’s framework.</p> <p>Connection of Ideas - Because plot events are revealed through dialogue, students need to make connections between what the characters say and how events and the characters’ reactions to those events drive the plot forward.</p> <p>Prior Knowledge - Students may not know about the racial and economic inequalities of sharecropping or the grave effects of the Great Depression on African American small landowners and sharecroppers. This may make it difficult for students to understand the significance of Thurston Wallace’s power over the characters in the story.</p>
	Excerpt Lexile®	820L
	Full-text Lexile®	920L
Word Count	1,384	
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Story Structure
	Close Read Prompt	Analyze how the story structure Mildred Taylor chose to use in this chapter of her novel <i>Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry</i> helped you to understand and appreciate the text. In your analysis, be sure to include examples of particular events and characterization. How did the examples fit into the overall structure of the text? How did they help to develop the story’s plot? Cite evidence from the text to support your ideas.
	Writing Form	“Short Constructed Response: Informative”

*Suggested Full-text Study

Children of the Dust Bowl: The True Story of the School at Weedpatch Camp

AUTHOR	Name	Jerry Stanley
	Gender	Male
	Nationality	American
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1993
	Literature / Informational	Informational
	Genre	Informational
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	These excerpts from <i>Children of the Dust Bowl: The True Story of the School at Weedpatch Camp</i> focus primarily on the plight of Okie children living in Kern County, California, during the 1930s. In addition to exploring the hostilities of Californians toward the Okies, Stanley discusses the efforts of Leo Hart to provide a school for the children. Students are asked to determine the author's main idea. Use the following suggestions to provide scaffolded instruction for a close reading of the more complex features of this text to help students master the skill:
	ACT Features	<p>Connection of Ideas - Stanley does not explicitly state the main idea in this selection. Instead, he leaves it to the reader to infer the most important ideas. Consequently, students need to decide what the text is mainly about and what the supporting details have in common.</p> <p>Organization - The selection is composed of excerpts from three chapters in <i>Children of the Dust Bowl</i>. Students will need to determine how the excerpts fit together in order to determine the author's main ideas.</p> <p>Specific Vocabulary - Stanley uses many words with negative connotations when describing the reactions of Californians to the Okies. In addition, he makes the point that the term Okies took on a negative connotation over time. Students will need to pay attention to the connotation of words when finding supporting evidence for the author's main ideas.</p> <p>Sentence Structure - Sentences are complex, and some include direct quotes.</p>
	Excerpt Lexile®	1,200L
	Full-text Lexile®	1,120L
Word Count	750	
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Central or Main Idea
	Close Read Prompt	What is the excerpt from <i>Children of the Dust Bowl: The True Story of the School at Weedpatch Camp</i> all about? What do the details in the text have in common? Use your understanding of central (or main) idea to determine two central ideas that are developed over the course of the text. Then use these central ideas and the details that support them to write an objective summary of the text in your own words. Support your writing with textual evidence. Be sure not to include your feelings, opinions or judgments in your summary.
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Informative/Explanatory

The Circuit: Stories from the Life of a Migrant Child

AUTHOR	Name	Francisco Jimenez
	Gender	Male
	Nationality	American
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1997
	Literature / Informational	Literature
	Genre	Autobiographical Stories
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	Through its rich first-person narration and limited dialogue, this excerpt from <i>The Circuit</i> helps students understand the emotional impact on a child of moving from farm to farm to pick fruits and vegetables. Use the following suggestions to provide scaffolded instruction for a close reading of the more complex features of this text.
	ACT Features	<p>Genre - Because <i>The Circuit: Stories from the Life of a Migrant Child</i> is a collection of autobiographical stories, this excerpt is told from a first-person point of view. Students are asked to consider how this point of view impacts their understanding of the story. Students will need to analyze details in the story to determine the impact.</p> <p>Connection of Ideas - The first-person point of view of the selection also means that students can only know the thoughts of the narrator. They cannot directly know the thoughts of Roberto, Papá, or the other characters. Students must infer the thoughts of these characters through narration, dialogue, and actions.</p> <p>Specific Vocabulary - The author uses many Spanish phrases that are not translated. Non-Spanish speakers will need to use context clues, the assistance of Spanish speakers, or Spanish–English dictionaries to determine meanings.</p>
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Excerpt Lexile®	730L
	Full-text Lexile®	730L
	Word Count	2,332
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Point of View
	Close Read Prompt	“Author Francisco Jimenez chose to write his autobiographical novel <i>The Circuit: Stories from the Life of a Migrant Child</i> from the first-person point of view of a child migrant worker. <i>Children of the Dust Bowl: The True Story of the School at Weedpatch Camp</i> is a nonfiction account of the migrant experience told from the third-person point of view. Compare and contrast how <i>The Circuit</i> and <i>Children of the Dust Bowl</i> convey different points of view about what life was like for young migrant workers as they faced challenges and hardships. Remember to support your writing with strong, relevant evidence from the texts to show how both points of view enrich your understanding of the migrant experience.”
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Informative/Explanatory

Les Misérables

AUTHOR	Name	Victor Hugo
	Gender	Male
	Nationality	French
	Translator	Isabel F. Hapgood
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1862
	Literature / Informational	Literature
	Genre	Fiction
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	In this excerpt from Les Misérables, Victor Hugo uses the Bishop's encounter with Valjean to explore the power of love and compassion to redeem a person. To help students uncover the theme and understand the story, use the following suggestions to provide scaffolded instruction for a close reading of the more complex features of this text:
	ACT Features	<p>Connection of Ideas - Students are asked to determine the theme of the excerpt. Since the theme is not directly stated, students must look for clues, paying special attention to the setting and the characters. The deep psychological and social undertones of the selection may challenge students.</p> <p>Prior Knowledge - Victor Hugo was writing in the 1800s during the turbulent years in France following Napoleon's defeat. Students are unlikely to have sufficient background knowledge to understand Hugo's political and social motivations. This may make it more difficult for students to understand the actions and motivations of both Valjean and the Bishop.</p> <p>Specific Vocabulary - Some students may have difficulty with unfamiliar English and French words and with understanding the connotation of descriptive words in the narration and dialogue.</p>
	Excerpt Lexile®	780L
	Full-text Lexile®	1,010L
Word Count	1,526	
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Theme
	Close Read Prompt	The Bishop, who sees goodness in Valjean and wants him to lead an honest life, implies to the gendarmes that Valjean did not steal the silver. Does his wish to help Valjean, to stand up for him, justify what he tells the gendarmes? What other reasons might he have had for acting as he does? Write a brief essay explaining how the Bishop's words and actions in the presence of the gendarmes relate to the story's theme.
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Informative/Explanatory

Jabberwocky

AUTHOR	Name	Lewis Carroll
	Gender	Male
	Nationality	British
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1872
	Literature / Informational	Literature
	Genre	Poem
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	<p>“Jabberwocky” by Lewis Carroll is a nonsensical poem about a brave boy’s heroic quest. Throughout the poem, Carroll’s use of invented language, rhyme, repetition of sounds, and punctuation help establish and maintain a fanciful tone. Use the following suggestions to provide scaffolded instruction for a close reading of the more complex features of this text:</p>
	ACT Features	<p>Specific Vocabulary - The invented language may challenge students. To understand and appreciate the poem, Carroll relies on the reader to use context to determine connotative meaning from the imaginative words.</p>
		<p>Sentence Structure - Given the nonsensical nature of the words, students need to consider how the words fit into the sentence structure. Students may need help seeing how they can pick out the nouns, adjectives, and verbs from their positions in the stanza and use these structural clues to create a mental picture of the creatures and what they are doing.</p>
		<p>Genre - Students are asked to analyze the tone of the poem. Carroll’s use of imagery contributes to the poem’s fantastical quality by helping the reader visualize a land full of strange and ominous beings. The whimsical rhyme and the strong, fast rhythm of meter also help create the tone. Students may need help isolating these elements.</p>
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Excerpt Lexile®	N/A
	Full-text Lexile®	N/A
	Word Count	166
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Tone
	Close Read Prompt	What serious point do you think Lewis Carroll might be making in “Jabberwocky”? Use your understanding of tone and connotation to support your opinion. Support your writing with evidence from the text.
	Writing Form	“Short Constructed Response: Argumentative”

Bullying in Schools

AUTHOR	Name	Point/Counterpoint
	Gender	
	Nationality	
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	2014
	Literature / Informational	Informational
	Genre	Pro/Con Op-Ed
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	<p>“Bullying in Schools” examine two points of view on how schools are handling the issue of bullying. Each author presents evidence with the goal of persuading readers to support his or her point of view. To evaluate the arguments, students must consider the effectiveness of each writer’s evidence and logic. To help students identify claims and evaluate each author’s argument, use the following suggestions to provide scaffolded instruction for the more complex features of this text:</p>
	ACT Features	<p>Purpose - Each author writes for the purpose of persuading readers to agree with one side of the argument. Consequently, students need to identify the claims each author makes and evaluate the strength of the reasons and evidence.</p>
		<p>Organization - The article devotes one section to each of the opposing points of view. Within each section, the author organizes the text by first presenting a claim about the topic and then supporting that claim with reasons and evidence. Students must draw evidence from both sections and compare the effectiveness of the arguments in order to decide with which point of view they agree.</p>
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Excerpt Lexile®	1,050L
	Full-text Lexile®	1,050L
	Word Count	1,670
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Argument and Claim
	Close Read Prompt	<p>The “Point” and “Counterpoint” authors offer two points of view on whether schools are doing enough to prevent bullying. Both offer reasons and evidence to support their claims. If you trace and evaluate the argument of each author, which author is most convincing? Which author most effectively uses reasons and evidence to support his or her claim? Use your understanding of purpose and point of view as you evaluate the argument in each passage. Support your writing with evidence from the texts.</p>
	Writing Form	“Short Constructed Response: Argumentative”



UNIT 4: OUR HEROES

Grade 6 Unit 4 continues to advance students toward their grade-level goal of proficiently reading and comprehending fiction, poetry, and literary nonfiction “in the grades 6-8 text complexity band, with scaffolding as needed in the high end of the range.” This unit contains a mix of literature (3) and informational texts (8). While some of the texts fall below or above the recommended quantitative dimensions (as measured by the Lexile® Framework) for Grades 6-8, the qualitative dimensions and task demands make the selections in this unit accessible but appropriately challenging for sixth-grade readers. Since this is the culminating unit in Grade 6 sequencing, the inclusion of several texts with higher-level vocabulary and greater complexity of structure addresses the goal of moving students further along the staircase of text complexity and richness.

The three literary selections—two poems and one novel excerpt—in this unit address increasingly sophisticated themes that reflect the ideas presented in the nonfiction selections. An excerpt from Walter Dean Myers’s *Sunrise Over Fallujah*, focuses on the conflicts faced by people in the modern military. Like many other selections in the unit, this selection revolves around the idea that heroes may not always feel or seem heroic in the moment. While its use of nonstandard English (in realistic dialogue) yields a Lexile score slightly below the recommended band, the selection’s ambiguous purpose, high demands on geographic and political knowledge, and specialized military vocabulary make it a valuable addition to the unit.

Literary selections bookend Unit 4, and the task demands for literature reflect a gradual increase in the demand on students’ analytical efforts. The first literary selection in the unit is Rita Dove’s “Rosa,” a short and powerful poem describing Rosa Parks’s arrest in a series of brief images. Associated lessons emphasize analyzing poetic structure and analyzing word relationships to derive meaning—a difficult skill pairing scaffolded by an additional related Blast activity. The unit closes with Luis Omar Salinas’s “My Father Is a Simple Man,” a free-form poetic text that shifts the unit’s focus from public heroes to personal ones. Associated lessons ask students to make connections to larger themes of heroism while navigating the poem’s complex punctuation structure and figurative language.

The informational texts in this unit represent a gradual increase in textual complexity and intertextual references, as well as in sophistication of language and concepts. The First Read lessons accompanying the selections with higher demand on cultural/literary knowledge are scaffolded with Build Background and related research links that foster students’ knowledge. The first selection in the unit, an excerpt from *Rosa Parks: My Story*, presents students with a first-hand account of Parks’s famous act of civil disobedience. While this selection falls slightly below the recommended quantitative band, the selection’s complex, flashback-heavy organization and high cultural knowledge demands (familiarity with of Jim Crow laws, for example, or

the boycott movement) make it an appropriate selection to open the unit. Following this, the entire first half of the unit focuses on the American civil rights movement, culminating in *Freedom Walkers: The Story of the Montgomery Bus Boycott*. This text, while at the lower end of the quantitative band for Grades 6-8, provides students with a complex structure to analyze, and high cultural knowledge demands—partially scaffolded by the related texts that precede it, and by the Build Background activity included in the associated First Read lesson. Additionally, the excerpt serves as an accessible introduction to a study of the complete book, which is this unit’s recommended full-text read.

Analyzing an author’s point of view and purpose is one of the primary task demands for this unit. Two back-to-back informational selections in this unit emphasize analyzing an author’s point of view and purpose: *The Education of George Washington: How a Forgotten Book Shaped the Character of a Hero*, and *Eleanor Roosevelt: A Life of Discovery*. The first, while it falls slightly above the recommended quantitative band, combines accessible, high-interest details and a humorous, conversational tone with heavy intertextuality. Its complex sentence structure is scaffolded by additional grammar support in the First Read lesson associated with the selection. The second lesson is an engaging biographical piece on Eleanor Roosevelt, which falls at the high end of the recommended quantitative band and which, additionally, serves as a scaffold for more complex selections (in print and media) about Roosevelt’s relationship with the American Civil Rights movement. These end-of-unit selections call back to the themes and topics of the unit’s opening, but with greater complexity and demands on the readers. By the time students have reached the last informational text in the unit, they will be prepared to complete the unit’s Extended Writing Project (Argumentative Writing).

Rosa Parks: My Story

AUTHOR	Name	Rosa Parks
	Gender	Female
	Nationality	American
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1992
	Literature / Informational	Informational
	Genre	Memoir
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	In this excerpt from <i>Rosa Parks: My Story</i> , Parks gives a firsthand account of her history-making ride on the Montgomery bus on December 1, 1955. Parks recalls with vivid detail the events leading up to her arrest, being escorted off the bus, and her treatment upon her arrival at City Hall where she was booked and jailed. Through her own words, Parks shares her thoughts, feelings, and reactions, and corrects distorted facts explaining her refusal to give up her seat on the bus. To help students understand Parks’s act of civil disobedience, use the following suggestions to provide scaffolded instruction for a close reading of the more complex features of this text:
	ACT Features	<p>Organization - The structure of the text is sequential, however, flashbacks included in the excerpt may pose a challenge for some students. Remind students that a flashback is an interruption in the chronological order of a narrative to show an event that happened earlier.</p> <p>Prior Knowledge - The enforcement of segregation in many states through “Jim Crow” laws may be unfamiliar to some readers.</p>
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Excerpt Lexile®	800L
	Full-text Lexile®	970L
	Word Count	1,397
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Connotation and Denotation; Informational Text Elements
	Close Read Prompt	Rosa Parks writes that she does not think about being the “test case the NAACP had been looking for.” Yet, she becomes the perfect complainant for this case. Based on the illustration of Parks’s character, as expressed through her actions and language, analyze why Rosa Parks has been called “the first lady of civil rights?” Support your writing with evidence from the text.
	Writing Form	“Short Constructed Response: Argumentative”

The Story Behind the Bus

AUTHOR	Name	The Henry Ford (Henry Ford Museum)
	Gender	
	Nationality	
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	2002
	Literature / Informational	Informational
	Genre	Informational
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	The Story Behind the Bus provides historical background on Rosa Parks and the stand she took against injustice while riding on a Montgomery bus. The passage describes the events that took place on the bus when Parks refused to surrender her seat to a white man. After being arrested for her defiant action and convicted of violating “Jim Crow” laws, Parks formally challenged the legality of segregation by appealing her conviction. Her arrest and actions to challenge segregation laws sparked a revolution in Civil Rights activism, which ultimately resulted in the desegregation of the Montgomery bus system. Parks’s role as a defender of human rights is reflected in the challenges of the text. To help students understand the circumstances surrounding Parks’s historic act, use the following suggestions to provide scaffolded instruction for a close reading of the more complex features of this text.
	ACT Features	<p>Organization - The text begins with the sequence of events that played out on Parks’s historic bus ride: the details of Parks’s bus ride, her arrest, her conviction, and her appeal. The boycott of the Montgomery buses in part as a result of Parks’s arrest is then profiled. Throughout this part of the text, various names of people and organizations are referenced as well as discussion of events and the implementation and appeal of laws prior to the events on the Montgomery bus. The inclusion of this background information at various points in the text can be complicated for students to keep track of.</p> <p>Sentence Structure - Sentences are complex and include direct quotes.</p> <p>Prior Knowledge - Jim Crow laws, the segregated South, NAACP, Plessy v. Ferguson, the Montgomery bus boycott, and the Civil Rights Movement may be unfamiliar to some students.</p>
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Excerpt Lexile®	1,140L
	Full-text Lexile®	1,140L
	Word Count	790
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Compare and Contrast
	Close Read Prompt	Rosa Parks: My Story and “The Story Behind the Bus” both tell about Rosa Parks’s famous refusal to give up her seat on a Montgomery bus. However, each author writes for a different purpose and from a different point of view. How are the two presentations of the same event similar and different? Use your understanding of the content as well as purpose, style, and point of view to compare and contrast the two texts. Support your writing with textual evidence from the texts.
	Writing Form	“Short Constructed Response: Informational/Explanatory”

Rosa

AUTHOR	Name	Rita Dove
	Gender	Female
	Nationality	American
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1986
	Literature / Informational	Literature
	Genre	Poem
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	Rita Dove pays tribute to civil rights activist Rosa Parks in her short poem “Rosa.” In not many words, Dove paints a powerful picture of Parks as a quiet, simple woman sparked by the fire of injustice. The pairing of short lines and stanzas with powerful language showcases the extraordinary courage of this modest woman. Through the structure and language, Dove builds tension that reflects the social and political tensions at the time Parks refused to give up her seat on a Montgomery bus. To help students understand of Parks’s determination to stand up for what she believed in, use the following suggestions to provide scaffolded instruction for a close reading of the more complex features of this text:
	ACT Features	<p>Sentence Structure - Sentence fragments with unconventional punctuation juxtapose ideas and force the reader to pause for reflection.</p> <p>Prior Knowledge - Students will need to have background knowledge of bus segregation laws and Rosa Parks’s bus ride and her arrest to understand the context of the poem.</p>
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Excerpt Lexile®	N/A
	Full-text Lexile®	N/A
	Word Count	61
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Word Relationships; Poetic Structure
	Close Read Prompt	At first glance, Rita Dove’s poem “Rosa” appears simple. However, once readers begin to unpack Dove’s compact use of poetic structure and language, they find that looks are deceiving. How does Dove use structure and language to mimic the subject of her poem Rosa Parks? Use your understanding of poetic structure, denotation and connotation, and word relationships to discuss the relationships among form, language, and meaning. Support your writing with textual evidence.
	Writing Form	“Short Constructed Response: Informational/Explanatory”

*Freedom Walkers: The Story of the Montgomery Bus Boycott

AUTHOR	Name	Russell Freedman
	Gender	Male
	Nationality	American
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	2006
	Literature / Informational	Informational
	Genre	Informational
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	In <i>Freedom Walkers: The Story of the Montgomery Bus Boycott</i> , Russell Freedman introduces readers to three teenagers who took a stand against unjust segregation laws years before Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on a Montgomery bus. The names of these teenagers are not widely known, but their actions were important in African Americans' fight to challenge the laws and desegregate buses. Freedman opens the chapter with an account of two teens who, because they were from New Jersey, were not used to the bus laws and were arrested and fined for not surrendering their seats to a white passenger on a Montgomery bus. Then Freedman focuses on Claudette Colvin, an African American teenager with an A grade point average who refused to give up her seat because she was aware of her Constitutional rights. The teens' courageous stands against injustice are reflected in the challenges of the text:
	ACT Features	<p>Genre - Students might find the transition between the opening quote from Claudette Colvin and the information on Edwina and Marshall Johnson confusing, and have difficulty drawing connections between the two.</p> <p>Prior Knowledge - Jim Crow laws, the segregated South, the Montgomery bus boycott, and the Civil Rights Movement may be unfamiliar to some students.</p>
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Excerpt Lexile®	930L
	Full-text Lexile®	1,110L
	Word Count	834
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Informational Text Structure
	Close Read Prompt	In this chapter, Russell Freedman informs readers about a sequence of events that preceded the Montgomery bus boycott, and he also makes a connection between the actions of Edwina and Marshall Johnson in 1949, other African American bus riders in Montgomery over the next few years, and Claudette Colvin in 1955. How does each section of the text fit into the overall structure and contribute to Freedman's development of ideas? Use your understanding of informational text structure to analyze the excerpt. Support your writing with textual evidence.
	Writing Form	"Short Constructed Response: Informational/Explanatory"

*Suggested Full-text Study

Sunrise Over Fallujah

AUTHOR	Name	Walter Dean Myers
	Gender	Male
	Nationality	American
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	2008
	Literature / Informational	Literature
	Genre	Fiction
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	This excerpt from Sunrise Over Fallujah is set in Kuwait during Operation Iraqi Freedom. Robin, the story's narrator, describes his impressions of camp life in Kuwait and his anticipation of fighting in Iraq. The first-person point of view as well as the historical and realistic nature of the novel are reflected in the challenges of the text. To help students understand the narrator and the conditions he faces, use the following suggestions to provide scaffolded instruction for a better understanding of the more complex features of this text:
	ACT Features	Genre - To fully understand the narrator's point of view in this historical fiction, students need to examine the narration and dialogue with attention to tone. This may be challenging for some readers. Specific Vocabulary - Military terms may present a challenge for some readers. Prior Knowledge - Students unfamiliar with Operation Iraqi Freedom may have difficulty with some of the historical and geographical references.
	Excerpt Lexile®	810L
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Full-text Lexile®	780L
	Word Count	865
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Tone; Point of View
	Close Read Prompt	By using a first-person narrator, Walter Dean Myers ensures that readers will experience Sunrise Over Fallujah only through what Robin is able to see, hear, think, and observe. How might the story's point of view be different if a different character, Jonesy for example, was the first-person narrator who told the story? Using details from the text, write an essay explaining how the excerpt would be different if told from Jonesy's point of view. What might Jonesy notice that would be different from what Robin observes? What would Jonesy's attitude be toward life in the camp? Would he share Robin's excitement or have other feelings? What would Jonesy have to say about Robin himself? Would his point of view on Robin be favorable? Use textual evidence to support your ideas.
	Writing Form	"Short Constructed Response: Informational/Explanatory"

An American Plague : The True and Terrifying Story of the Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1793

AUTHOR	Name	Jim Murphy
	Gender	Male
	Nationality	American
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	2003
	Literature / Informational	Informational
	Genre	Informational
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	This excerpt from An American Plague: The True and Terrifying Story of the Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1793 examines an outbreak of yellow fever in Philadelphia by focusing on the illness of one patient and the observations of three physicians attending to her. To help students understand the author’s use of medical terminology, both modern and from the 1700s, the level of detail in the descriptions, and the complexity of some sentences, use the following suggestions to provide scaffolded instruction for a close reading of the more complex features of this text:
	ACT Features	<p>Connection of Ideas - Author Jim Murphy is recounting a medical mystery. Consequently, he doesn’t state the central idea at the beginning of the excerpt. Students will need to identify and connect the details as they read to determine the central idea.</p> <p>Specific Vocabulary - A variety of medical terms and other unfamiliar words will challenge readers.</p> <p>Sentence Structure - Sentences with multiple phrases and clauses and the extensive use of pronouns may challenge students. Paying careful attention to the cases and the antecedents of pronouns may help students read the text.</p>
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Excerpt Lexile®	1,090L
	Full-text Lexile®	1,130L
	Word Count	920
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Central or Main Idea
	Close Read Prompt	Notice that the text says that Dr. Rush “worked from early in the morning until late at night” on a number of tasks, including “writing letters and papers.” Physicians often write papers about health-related topics for publication in medical journals. Imagine that you are Dr. Hodge, Dr. Foulke, or Dr. Rush. Summarize for city politicians the health situation in Philadelphia in 1793. What might you say? Write an objective summary introducing the central or main idea and the details that support it, such as facts, definitions, and examples. Be sure not to include your feelings or judgments. Support your writing with textual evidence.
	Writing Form	"Short Constructed Response: Informational/Explanatory"

Celebrities as Heroes

AUTHOR	Name	Point/Counterpoint	
	Gender		
	Nationality		
	Translator		
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	2015	
	Literature / Informational	Informational	
	Genre	Pro/Con Op-Ed	
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	The “Point” and “Counterpoint” arguments in “Celebrities as Heroes” examine the validity of assigning celebrities hero status from two opposing viewpoints. Each author has ideas about the qualities of a hero and whether celebrities’ actions match those requirements. In the end, it’s up to the reader to decide which author’s argument is more convincing. Readers must carefully evaluate the reasons and evidence each author provides to support his or her claim in order to make an informed decision about which argument to agree with. To help students identify claims and evaluate each author’s arguments, use the following suggestions to provide scaffolded instruction for the more complex features of this text:	
	ACT Features		Purpose - Students may be challenged by the fact that the writers have cross-purposes; though each author writes for the purpose of persuading the reader to accept his or her point of view as more convincing, they take contradictory positions.
			Organization - This article presents two opposing viewpoints on the same topic, with each argument presented in a section of its own. The first argument begins with a series of quotations that lack context until further reading; the abrupt start may confuse some readers.
		Connection of Ideas - Students may struggle to find the basic claim present in each argument, as the writers move between evidence (often through the voices of others, in the form of quotation), analysis, conjecture, and rhetoric, such as hyperbole.	
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Excerpt Lexile®	1,120L	
	Full-text Lexile®	N/A	
	Word Count	1,313	
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Arguments and Claims	
	Close Read Prompt	The “Point” and “Counterpoint” authors offer two points of view regarding whether celebrities are heroes. Both offer reasons and evidence to support their claims. If you trace and evaluate the argument of each author, which author is most convincing? Which author most effectively uses reasons and evidence to support his or her claim? Use your understanding of purpose and point of view as you evaluate the argument in each passage. Support your opinion with textual evidence.	
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Argumentative	

The Education of George Washington: How a Forgotten Book Shaped the Character of a Hero

AUTHOR	Name	Austin Washington
	Gender	Male
	Nationality	American
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	2014
	Literature / Informational	Informational
	Genre	Informational
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	This excerpt from <i>The Education of George Washington: How a Forgotten Book Shaped the Character of a Hero</i> focuses on events at Valley Forge in the winter of 1777 and on the contributions of Lieutenant General Baron von Steuben to camp life and the war effort. To help students understand Austin Washington’s dual focus on Valley Forge and von Steuben, his use of historical and cultural allusions, and his writing style, which includes some very long sentences and unfamiliar, Tier-3 words, use the following suggestions to provide scaffolded instruction for the more complex features of this text:
	ACT Features	<p>Purpose - The text begins by describing events at Valley Forge in the winter of 1777, then switches focus to Baron von Steuben’s character and to his contributions. Some students may be challenged by the author’s seemingly dual purpose.</p> <p>Sentence Structure - Sentences with multiple clauses and extensive use of dashes and commas may present problems for some students.</p> <p>Specific Vocabulary - The use of personification and unfamiliar words may challenge students.</p> <p>Prior Knowledge - The author’s use of historical and cultural allusions may present a challenge for students. For example, Washington refers to the Friberg painting as Rockwellesque. The reference will not make sense to students unfamiliar with Norman Rockwell and his paintings. Students may not be familiar with the reference to the Duke of Schonberg and the Panegyric, which is a “formal speech or writing praising a person or thing.”</p>
	Excerpt Lexile®	1,240L
	Full-text Lexile®	N/A
Word Count	1,581	
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Author’s Purpose and Author’s Point of View; Figurative Language
	Close Read Prompt	In <i>The Education of George Washington: How a Forgotten Book Shaped the Character of a Hero</i> , how effectively does the author, Austin Washington, convey his point of view regarding the events at Valley Forge and the role of Baron Von Steuben in the American war effort? How do the presentation of facts and details, as well as the use of language, support the author’s point of view? Do you find the author’s points of view convincing? Why or why not? Support your writing with evidence from the text.
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Argumentative

Eleanor Roosevelt: A Life of Discovery

AUTHOR	Name	Russell Freedman
	Gender	Male
	Nationality	American
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1993
	Literature / Informational	Informational
	Genre	Informational
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	In this excerpt from Eleanor Roosevelt: A Life of Discovery, author Russell Freedman describes both Eleanor Roosevelt's personal transformation and how she transformed the role of First Lady. To help students understand the author's purpose in the excerpt, provide scaffolded instruction for a close reading of these more complex features of the text:
		Connection of Ideas - Because the author writes to inform, to explain, to describe, and, at times, to entertain, some readers will need help drawing inferences from text evidence in order to understand the author's specific purpose in different paragraphs.
	ACT Features	Specific Vocabulary - Some students may have difficulty with unfamiliar terms and with understanding the connotations of the sensory language the author uses to describe Eleanor Roosevelt.
		Prior Knowledge - The author's use of historical allusions or references may present a challenge for students.
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Excerpt Lexile®	1,110L
	Full-text Lexile®	1,100L
	Word Count	797
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Author's Purpose and Author's Point of View
	Close Read Prompt	Russell Freedman subtitles his biographical portrait of Eleanor Roosevelt "a life of discovery." Looking to the excerpt from chapter 1, identify Freedman's purpose for writing: to inform, to explain, to describe, or to entertain. What does Freedman suggest Eleanor Roosevelt discovered about herself over the course of a lifetime, and what character traits do you believe qualify her as a positive role model or American hero? Support your writing with evidence from the text.
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Informational/Explanatory

Eleanor Roosevelt and Marian Anderson

AUTHOR	Name	Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum
	Gender	Male
	Nationality	American
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	2014
	Literature / Informational	Informational
	Genre	Informational
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	The article “Eleanor Roosevelt and Marian Anderson” discusses the steps Roosevelt took in bringing national attention to the issue of segregation in the United States. The text discusses Roosevelt’s response to the Daughters of the Revolution’s decision to forbid Marian Anderson—a hugely popular African American vocalist of the time—to perform at their venue based on the color of her skin. To help students understand the steps Roosevelt took in attempting to break color barriers, use the following suggestions to provide scaffolded instruction for a close reading of the more complex features of this text:
	ACT Features	Sentence Structure - Sentences are complex and include direct quotes.
		Specific Vocabulary - Some difficult vocabulary may present a challenge to readers.
Prior Knowledge - Students may be unfamiliar with Eleanor Roosevelt and Marian Anderson as well as the time period (1930s) and the race relations at that time.		
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Excerpt Lexile®	1,340L
	Full-text Lexile®	1,340L
	Word Count	1,065
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Media
	Close Read Prompt	By integrating the information presented in the primary and secondary sources as well as the audio file, you may develop a coherent understanding of Eleanor Roosevelt’s resignation from DAR and the events that followed. Compare and contrast the secondary authors’ presentation of events with the primary sources from Roosevelt herself. Which details are emphasized or absent in each medium? What are the possible reasons behind these choices? How does each source contribute to your understanding of the issue? Support your writing with textual evidence.
	Writing Form	Short Constructed Response: Informational/Explanatory

My Father Is a Simple Man

AUTHOR	Name	Luis Omar Salinas
	Gender	Male
	Nationality	American
	Translator	
QUALITATIVE FEATURES	Publication Date	1987
	Literature / Informational	Literature
	Genre	Poem
	Scaffold Instruction to Access Complex Text	In “My Father Is a Simple Man,” Luis Omar Salinas explores the value of a life devoted to providing and caring for a family. Students are asked to analyze the poem’s themes and to compare and contrast the poem’s delivery in print and audio. To help students master these skills, use the following suggestions to provide scaffolded instruction for the more complex features of this text:
	ACT Features	<p>Connection of Ideas - Some readers will need help drawing inferences based on events described in the poem and on poetic devices such as word repetition. As one example, connecting the idea of a “walk to town” with a “journey” that’s “been lifelong” is critical to understanding the poem.</p> <p>Sentence Structure - Sentences are simple, but understanding the punctuation is essential to reading the poem, whether aloud or quietly to oneself. Some readers will need help understanding how the punctuation affects meaning.</p> <p>Specific Vocabulary - The use and interpretation of figurative language may present a challenge to some readers.</p>
QUANTITATIVE FEATURES	Excerpt Lexile®	N/A
	Full-text Lexile®	N/A
	Word Count	207
READER AND TASKS	Skill Lessons	Theme; Media
	Close Read Prompt	The speaker of “My Father Is a Simple Man” ends the poem by saying that when his father dies, the speaker will “have learned what little/there is about greatness.” What has the speaker learned about greatness from his father? Do you agree with the speaker that greatness is a topic about which there is “little” to learn? Why or why not? Use your understanding of theme and poetic structure to analyze the message of the poem. Support your writing with textual evidence.
	Writing Form	“Short Constructed Response: Argumentative”

ELA Grade Level Overview Grade 6

Writing

Overall Approach to Writing Instruction

StudySync instructs students on a variety of writing forms that adhere to the CA CCSS for ELA. Each unit of the program exposes students to a different writing form and all of its associated skills and processes, which they practice through unit-specific Extended Writing Projects (EWP). At each grade level, one EWP covers each of the following writing forms: narrative, informative/explanatory, literary analysis, and argumentative writing.

Direct instruction in writing includes reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language lessons and activities, all of which are scaffolded to support learners of varying backgrounds and abilities. Writing activities in each unit, from the in-depth Extended Writing Project to the shorter writing prompts and online Blast responses, explore different aspects of the writing process, giving students a variety of writing practice opportunities to hone their skills and enhance their understanding of each unit's particular writing form. This application of the writing skills and processes culminates in the Extended Writing Project which challenges students and holds them accountable to their learning experiences. Students write reflective pieces, short constructed responses, immediate response pieces, and pieces that require summary and exploration of both literary and informative readings. They evaluate and assess Student Model examples that connect to the modes of writing in each unit. Lessons push students to effectively express themselves and rely on textual evidence as a basis of support for their ideas. Students have a myriad of opportunities to enrich their writing, including immersion in specific academic vocabulary, peer review and revision, and group discussion and collaboration. They explore different formats of presenting and publishing the finished works that represent their best possible writing efforts in the program.

WRITING TASK CHART

		UNIT 1	UNIT 2	UNIT 3	UNIT 4
		Turning Points: What happens when life changes direction?	Ancient Realms: How does history inform and inspire us?	Facing Challenges: When should we stand up for others and ourselves?	Our Heroes: What does it mean to be a hero?
EXTENDED WRITING PROJECT	Writing Form	Informative	Literary Analysis (Argumentative)	Narrative	Argumentative
	Prompt	Think about the selections you have read that involve life-changing experiences. Write an informative/explanatory essay in which you explain how three individuals in three of the excerpts you have read faced life-changing experiences, and analyze the impact of these changes on their lives and their countries.	Despite all the advances of modern life, we continue to draw inspiration from the ancient world. Ancient culture's influence is visible in our modern-day words and expressions, mythological references, laws, and values. Draw on a theme, idea, or lesson expressed in selections from this unit to write a literary analysis that demonstrates how ancient culture continues to shape the modern world.	In this unit, you've been reading fiction and nonfiction narratives—imagined and true stories—about characters and real people who had to choose whether to stand up for themselves, another person, or their community. What motivated them to speak and act as they did? When and why do people decide it's time to take action? Write a fictional narrative about someone who takes a stand to help another person or to make a bad situation better. Think about why your character decides to take a stand. What does your character hope to change? What does your character do? What is the outcome of your character's efforts?	Every day the media runs headlines celebrating heroes among us. The firefighter who charges into the burning building to save an infant is a hero. The nurse who risks her own life to help patients with infectious diseases—she's a hero too. What qualities do all heroes have in common? What makes one person more heroic than another? In this unit, you have been reading both nonfiction and fiction texts about people who are considered American heroes—George Washington, Eleanor Roosevelt, Rosa Parks, the Freedom Walkers, Dr. Benjamin Rush, Gulf War soldiers. Recognizing that not everyone agrees on what it means to be a hero or who our heroes are, write an argumentative essay that identifies an individual from the selections in this unit who you feel best exemplifies the qualities of a hero. To support your ideas you will include textual evidence from at least one selection in unit 4 and research from three other print or digital sources.
	Student Model	"The Power of Change"	"The Consequences of Thoughtlessness"	"Taking the Shot"	"Rosa Parks: A True American Hero"
	Process Steps	Prewrite; Plan; Draft; Revise; Edit, Proofread, and Publish	Prewrite; Plan; Draft; Revise; Edit, Proofread, and Publish	Prewrite; Plan; Draft; Revise; Edit, Proofread, and Publish	Prewrite; Plan; Draft; Revise; Edit, Proofread, and Publish
	Writing Skills	Thesis Statement; Audience and Purpose (Blast); Organize Informative Writing; Supporting Details; Introductions; Body Paragraphs and Transitions; Conclusions; Syle (Blast); Sources and Citations	Thesis Statement; Audience and Purpose (Blast); Organize Argumentative Writing; Supporting Details; Introductions; Body Paragraphs and Transitions; Conclusions; Syle (Blast); Sources and Citations	Audience and Purpose (Blast); Organize Narrative Writing; Descriptive Details; Introduction/Story Beginning; Narrative Techniques and Sequencing; Conclusion/Story Ending; Style (Blast)	Audience, Purpose, and Style (Blast); Research and Note-taking; Thesis Statement; Organize Argumentative Writing; Supporting Details; Introductions and Conclusions; Body Paragraphs and Transitions; Sources and Citations
	Language Skills	Pronoun/Antecedent Agreement, Reflexive and Intensive Pronouns, Spelling Words with the Schwa Sound	Pronoun Agreement: Person and Number, Reflexive and Intensive Pronouns, Spelling Multi-Syllable Words	Restrictive and Nonrestrictive Elements, Revising Dialogue, Pronoun Agreement: Number and Gender,	Style and Tone, Writing Effective Sentences, Spelling Words with Greek and Latin Roots
	Mentor Texts	Guts: The True Stories Behind Hatchet and the Brian Books; I Never Had It Made; Warriors Don't Cry	A Short Walk Around the Pyramids & through the World of Art; Heroes Every Child Should Know; Black Ships Before Troy	A Wrinkle in Time; Red Scarf Girl: A Memoir of the Cultural Revolution	Celebrities as Heroes; Rosa Parks: My Story; The Story Behind the Bus



UNIT 1: TURNING POINTS

The Extended Writing Project (EWP) in Grade 6, Unit 1 focuses on the informative/explanatory form. Students probe the unit’s central question—What happens when life changes direction?—as they write an informative/explanatory essay that explains how three individuals in three of the unit’s selections faced life-changing experiences, and how those experiences had both a personal and societal impact. In response to the EWP prompt, students will examine closely how the unit selections relate to the unit theme—Turning Points—and reflect on reasons why life changes direction, as well as on the results of such changes. The unit’s selections about people who each participated in a process of personal and social transformation provide a context for students as they select the subjects of their work and begin their informative/explanatory writing.

In order to assist students in their work, the EWP provides a Student Model that contains the essential features of the informative/explanatory form and offers an example of a structured academic grade-level response to the prompt. The Student Model is used to help students better understand how informative elements such as a thesis statement and a clear organizational structure work together to create an effective essay; analyze how the Model employs specific skills, such as the presentation of relevant textual evidence and the creation of a strong conclusion, to capture and retain readers’ interest; examine the process the writer used to develop the essay through graphic organizers and road maps; and identify how the Model might, like their own essays, benefit from revision. Additionally, excerpts from the unit selections are offered to show students how real-world examples of informative/explanatory writing exhibit essential features of the form. For example, students analyze how Jackie Robinson’s introduction to *I Never Had it Made* is enlivened by a “hook,” and how the conclusion of *Warriors Don’t Cry* by Melba Patillo Beals, leaves readers with an inspiring message.

The EWP contains instructional lessons designed to help students learn specific skills for crafting their informative/explanatory writing. Three examples of such lessons include the skills lessons on organization, body paragraphs and transitions, and sources and citations. The Organize Informative Writing lesson introduces students to different organizational structures, including sequential, compare and contrast, cause and effect, and problem and solution. The Body Paragraphs and Transitions lesson helps student understand how transitions both indicate the relationship among ideas in an essay and also signal the overall organizational structure. The Sources and Citations lesson provides a definition of sources and stresses the importance of citing them both to inform interested readers and to avoid plagiarism. The instruction and accompanying practice activities in these lessons provide scaffolding to allow students of a variety of backgrounds and experiences access to an in-depth understanding of the informative/explanatory writing form.

Students apply all of the informative/explanatory writing skills they have learned in the unit as they engage in five writing process lessons: prewriting, planning, drafting, revising, and editing/proofreading/publishing. Within these process lessons, students plan, organize, create, and enhance an original informative/explanatory work to achieve a polished final product. For example, in the Plan lesson, students create a “road map” based on an example offered by the Student Model. The steps of the writing process, as in the Draft and Revise lessons, emphasize student application of the particular skills students have learned. Additionally, students offer one another thoughtful peer reviews after each stage in the writing process, using specific rubrics that apply to informative/explanatory writing; writers are encouraged to consider and incorporate this feedback in subsequent stages. These opportunities for collaboration help students to internalize the aspects of informative/explanatory writing. They practice the art of discussion, offering constructive suggestions, and they learn to listen to the feedback of their peers in a cooperative effort to revise their writing to the highest possible standard.

Short constructed responses that accompany all Close Read lessons in the unit help students demonstrate understanding of the specific reading and language skills developed in conjunction with the texts, such as the use of textual evidence to identify central idea in the magazine article “The Father of Chinese Aviation” or the identification of informational text structure in the memoir *Warriors Don’t Cry*. The prompts also enable students to develop their thinking about the three individuals they select as the subjects of their essay. Additionally, unit Blasts provide a range of topics that discuss how turning points can impact not only one individual’s life but also history. These topics enable students to develop succinct responses to readings and stimulate their thinking about how to develop their own informative/explanatory writing.



UNIT 2: ANCIENT REALMS

The Extended Writing Project (EWP) in Grade 6, Unit 2 focuses on literary analysis, a form of argumentative writing. Students probe the unit’s central question—How does history inform and inspire us?—as they write a literary analysis that draws on a theme, idea, or lesson from the unit’s selections to demonstrate how ancient cultures continue to influence us today. In response to the EWP prompt, students will examine closely how the unit selections reveal different aspects of the unit’s theme—Ancient Realms—and reflect on reasons why these realms retain power over us. As students do so, they are helped to understand what a literary analysis is, and why it is an important writing form. The unit’s selections provide an opportunity for students to juxtapose poems, myths, and nonfiction that treat comparable topics, themes, and characters. In writing a literary analysis, students must closely examine these texts to frame an argument about the works’ relationship to one another and ongoing significance in the modern world.

In order to assist students in their work, the EWP provides a Student Model that contains the essential features of the literary analysis form and offers an example of a structured academic grade-level response to the prompt. The Student Model is used to help students better understand how argumentative elements such as a clear claim and supporting reasons work together to create an effective argument; analyze how the Model employs specific skills, such as the presentation of relevant textual evidence, to demonstrate an argument’s validity; examine how the writer developed the literary analysis through the use of graphic organizers and road maps; and identify how the Model might, like students’ own literary analyses, benefit from revision. The unit selections offer students a rich trove of texts from which to choose material for a literary analysis. For example, three texts allow students to examine the history, culture, and art of ancient Egypt from very different perspectives. The Greek hero Perseus appears both in a modern poem and in a prose retelling of a myth, an excellent focus should a student choose to analyze similarities and differences in the same character presented in different genres.

The EWP contains instructional lessons designed to help students learn specific skills for crafting their literary analysis. Three examples of such lessons include the ones on thesis statement, audience and purpose, and supporting details. The Thesis Statement skills lesson helps students understand how to shape a thesis statement in the form of a specific claim. The Audience and Purpose blast demonstrates why a writer needs to identify his or her potential readers and reasons for writing in order to create a successful work. The Supporting Details lesson provides an example of ways to support a claim with sufficient evidence. The instruction and accompanying practice activities in these and other skills lessons provide scaffolding to allow students of a variety of backgrounds and experiences access to an in-depth understanding of literary analysis as a form of argumentative writing.

Students apply all of the argumentative writing skills they have learned in the unit as they engage in five writing process lessons: prewriting, planning, drafting, revising, and editing/proofreading/publishing. Within these process lessons, students plan, organize, create, and enhance an original literary analysis to achieve a polished final product. For example, in the Prewrite lesson, students identify patterns within and across texts in order to generate ideas for their literary analysis. In the Plan lesson, they create a “road map” for their analysis based on an example offered by the Student Model. The steps of the writing process in the Draft and Revise lessons emphasize student application of the particular skills they have learned. Additionally, students offer one another thoughtful peer reviews after each stage in the writing process, using specific rubrics that apply to argumentative writing; writers are encouraged to consider and incorporate this feedback in subsequent stages. These opportunities for collaboration help students to internalize the aspects of argumentative writing. They practice the art of discussion, offering and receiving constructive suggestions in a cooperative effort to revise their narrative writing to the highest possible standard.

Short constructed responses that accompany all Close Read lessons in the unit help students demonstrate understanding of the specific reading and language skills developed in conjunction with the texts, such as the analysis of argument and claim in Isaacson’s *A Short Walk Around the Pyramids & Through the World of Art*, and the exploration of themes in three of Aesop’s fables. The prompts also enable students to develop their thinking about the texts they each select as material for their literary analysis. Additionally, unit Blasts provide a range of topics that discuss how the past can inspire us. These topics enable students to develop succinct responses to readings and stimulate their thinking about how to develop a literary analysis that both answers the EWP prompt and, in doing so, illuminates the unit’s central question.



UNIT 3: FACING CHALLENGES

The Extended Writing Project (EWP) in Grade 6, Unit 3 focuses on the narrative form. Students probe the unit’s central question—When should we stand up for others and ourselves?—as they write a fictional narrative about someone who takes a stand to help another person or to make a positive change. In response to the EWP prompt, students will imagine an unfair situation that enables them to relate to the unit theme—Facing Challenges—and to reflect on reasons why it can be difficult or challenging to take such a stand. The unit’s fiction and nonfiction selections about characters and real people who stand up against injustice provide a context for students as they begin their narratives.

In order to assist students in their work, the EWP provides a Student Model that contains the essential features of the narrative form and offers an example of a structured grade-level response to the prompt. The Student Model is used to help students better understand how elements such as a narrator and a logical event sequence work together to create an engaging story; analyze how the Model employs specific skills, such as effective dialogue and descriptive details, to capture and retain readers’ interest; examine the process the writer used to develop the narrative through graphic organizers and story road maps; and identify how the Model might, like their own narratives, benefit from revision. Additionally, excerpts from the unit selections are offered to show students how professional, real-world examples of both fiction and nonfiction narratives exhibit essential features of the form. For example, students analyze how Madeleine L’Engle differentiates the style and tone of a narrator from those of the characters in the excerpt from her novel *A Wrinkle in Time*, and how the excerpt from *Red Scarf Girl: A Memoir of the Cultural Revolution* by Ji-Li Jiang opens with a dramatic “hook.” These models serve as both teaching tools and sources of inspiration for young writers.

In addition to reviewing writing skills applicable to all modes, such as audience and purpose, style, introductions, and conclusions, this EWP contains several skills unique to the narrative form of writing. Three examples of such lessons include the skills lessons on organization, descriptive details, and narrative techniques and sequencing. The Organize Narrative Writing lesson introduces students to different methods of organizing the events of their plot. For example, writers may use chronological order, relating events in the sequence in which they occur. They may also organize the action through moving backwards in time, using character flashbacks, or even choose to begin a story in its middle, when certain key events have already occurred. The Descriptive Details lesson offers students the chance to learn how to develop setting, characters, and plot through precise language and descriptive details. The Narrative Techniques and Sequencing lesson provides instruction on strategies, such as description, pacing, and dialogue, that students can apply to their narratives to truly bring the story to life for readers. These activities provide scaffolding to allow students of

a variety of backgrounds and experiences access to an in-depth understanding of the narrative writing form.

Students apply all of the narrative writing skills they have learned in the unit as they engage in five writing process lessons: prewriting, planning, drafting, revising, and editing/proofreading/publishing. Within these process lessons, students plan, organize, create, and enhance an original narrative work to achieve a polished final product. For example, in the Plan lesson, students create a story road map based on an example offered by the Student Model. The steps of the writing process in the Draft and Revise lessons emphasize student application of the particular narrative skills they have learned. Additionally, students offer one another thoughtful peer reviews after each stage in the writing process, using specific rubrics that apply to narrative writing; writers are encouraged to consider and incorporate this feedback in subsequent stages. These opportunities for collaboration help students to internalize the aspects of narrative writing. They practice the art of discussion, offering and receiving constructive suggestions in a cooperative effort to revise their narrative writing to the highest possible standard.

Short constructed responses that accompany all Close Read lessons in the unit help students demonstrate understanding of the specific reading and language skills developed in conjunction with the texts, such as identifying plot in *A Wrinkle in Time*, exploring point of view in *The Circuit: Stories from the Life of a Migrant Child*, and analyzing theme in *Les Misérables*. The prompts also enable students to develop their thinking about taking a stand in preparation for writing about a character who does so in their narrative EWP. For example, students are prompted to take a position on whether schools are doing enough to prevent bullying. Additionally, unit Blasts provide a range of topics that discuss individuals who have decided to stand up for themselves, for another person, or for their community in an attempt to make a positive change. These topics enable students to develop succinct responses to readings and stimulate their thinking about how to develop their narrative writing.



UNIT 4: OUR HEROES

The Extended Writing Project (EWP) in Grade 6, Unit 4 focuses on argumentative writing. Instruction builds on what students previously learned about the form when they crafted a literary analysis in Unit 2. Students probe this unit’s central question—What does it mean to be a hero?—as they write an argumentative essay that identifies an individual from the unit who, in the writer’s opinion, best exemplifies the qualities of a hero. In order to find information and provide validity for their argument, students are asked to conduct research in at least three print or digital sources in addition to unit selections. In responding to the EWP prompt, students examine closely how the unit selections portray individuals who embody aspects of the unit theme—Our Heroes—and reflect on qualities generally thought to be heroic. The unit’s fiction and nonfiction selections provide context for students as they begin their argumentative essays.

In order to assist students in their work, the EWP provides a Student Model that contains the essential features of the argumentative form and offers an example of a structured academic grade-level response to the prompt. The Student Model is used to help students better understand how argumentative elements, such as a compelling claim and textual evidence from credible sources, work together to create an effective argument; examine how the Model’s ideas and information were developed through research; analyze how the Model employs specific skills, such as the use of strong supporting details, to enhance the argument’s persuasive power; and identify how the Model might, like students’ own argumentative essays, benefit from revision.

The EWP contains instructional lessons designed to help students learn specific skills for crafting their argumentative essay. Examples of such skills lessons include those on research and note-taking, body paragraphs and transitions, and sources and citations. The Research and Note-taking lesson helps students understand how to pose and use questions to guide their research. The lesson also provides information on identifying and accessing credible sources and taking accurate and complete notes. The Body Paragraphs and Transitions lesson demonstrates how writers smoothly integrate research into their work by paraphrasing and quoting source material. The Sources and Citations lesson builds on what students have already learned about this topic by showing them how to create a Works Cited list. The activities in these and other skills lessons provide scaffolding to allow students of various backgrounds and experiences access to an in-depth understanding of argumentative writing.

Students apply all of the argumentative writing skills they have learned in the unit as they engage in five writing process lessons: prewriting, planning, drafting, revising, and editing/proofreading/publishing. Within these process lessons, students plan, organize, create, and enhance an original argumentative essay to

achieve a polished final product. The steps of the writing process in the Draft and Revise lessons emphasize student application of the particular skills students have learned. For example, in the Revise lesson, students carefully review their drafts to ensure that their work maintains a consistently formal style and tone appropriate to an argumentative essay’s purpose and audience. Additionally, students offer one another thoughtful peer reviews after each stage in the writing process, using specific rubrics that apply to argumentative writing; writers are encouraged to consider and incorporate this feedback in subsequent stages. These opportunities for collaboration help students to internalize the aspects of argumentative writing. They practice the art of discussion, offering constructive suggestions, and they learn to listen to the feedback of their peers in a cooperative effort to revise their writing to the highest possible standard.

Short constructed responses that accompany all Close Read lessons in the unit help students demonstrate understanding of the specific reading and language skills developed in conjunction with the texts, such as the evaluation of two arguments in the Point/Counterpoint article “Celebrities as Heroes” and the analysis of purpose and point of view in the nonfiction excerpts from *Eleanor Roosevelt: A Life of Discovery* and *The Education of a George Washington: How a Forgotten Book Shaped the Character of a Hero*. The prompts also enable students to develop their thinking about which individual they wish to present as the exemplar of a hero in their argumentative essay. Additionally, unit Blasts provide a range of topics that discuss what constitutes heroism past and present. These topics enable students to develop succinct responses to readings and stimulate their thinking about how to develop their argumentative writing.



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