Amplify ELA

Welcome!

8A: Perspectives & Narrative

This unit aims to teach students to read like writers. They practice paying attention to the craft of writing: to the moves a good writer makes to shape the way we see a scene or feel about a character—to stir us up, or surprise us, or leave us wondering what will happen next. Students closely read a variety of short, engaging examples of narrative non-fiction, analyze both the themes and the techniques of each author, and practice applying these techniques to their own narrative writing.

Core texts your student will read:

- Excerpts from *Going Solo* by Roald Dahl
- "Fish Cheeks" by Amy Tan
- "My Mother's Garden" by Kaitlyn Greenidge

What your students will do/learn:

- Students experiment with some of the narrative writing techniques used in the texts they read, including writing focused descriptions with strong verbs and vivid details to capture the feeling of a moment; speeding up and slowing down a moment in writing; and using dialogue and description to capture characters and points of view.
- Students learn key classroom routines, including the sharing routine, during which classmates respond to shared writing by noting one effective way the writer used language or details or evidence.
- Students analyze and discuss how the adolescent characters in “Fish Cheeks” and “My Mother’s Garden” define themselves and their families compared with how society may view them.
- Students write consistently throughout the unit, developing their idea or claim about the text and providing textual evidence.
- Students will write an end of unit essay responding to the following prompt: Are the mothers featured in “Fish Cheeks” and “My Mother’s Garden” role models for their daughters? Why or why not?

Here are some conversation starters that you can use during this unit to promote discussion and encourage continued learning with your student.

1. What techniques did you use to try to communicate about the experiences, the people, and the feelings in the narrative writing you did as you read Amy Tan and Kaitlyn Greenidge’s writing? Which did you find to be the easiest to use? The hardest? Which one made the biggest impact on your writing?
2. What does Roald Dahl notice most about being a fighter pilot in World War II when he writes about it in *Going Solo*? The excitement? The danger? Something else?

3. How do the experiences of Amy Tan in “Fish Cheeks” and Kaitlyn Greenidge in “My Mother’s Garden” relate to your experiences and the experiences of people you know? Do you think these are experiences and feelings shared by many teenagers?
4. Can you share a piece of writing with me in which you used precise details to show, not tell? (Provide feedback to your student by finding something in their writing that you can respond to as a reader. For example, “In your writing, I really like how you describe the smile and the welcoming words of that cafeteria worker. With those details, I could understand how kind she was to you on your first day in a new school.”)
5. How would you describe the mothers in “Fish Cheeks” and “My Mother’s Garden”? How would you describe their relationships with their daughters?

AmplifyELA

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8B: Liberty & Equality

In this unit, students study the writings of Americans who were critically engaged in a debate about the meaning of the words "all men are created equal" during the Civil War. Walt Whitman was a poet who tried to describe something essential about the identity of the American self. Students read excerpts from his poem "Song of Myself," and try on his poetic form and use of figurative language to craft their own poem about "self." Frederick Douglass's *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* then guides students as they reflect on the American ideals of equality, opportunity, justice, and freedom. The memoir describes his powerful journey to liberation, and provides the opportunity for students to analyze his potent rhetoric and powerful arguments against slavery. Harriet Ann Jacobs's memoir, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl,* allows students to explore her detailed picture of life as an enslaved woman and consider her powerful picture of slavery's human cost. Excerpts from *The Boys' War* capture the voices and brutal experiences of adolescents who fought on both sides during the Civil War. After thinking critically about this variety of voices, students consider how the language in the Gettysburg Address presented the American people a way to recommit to their nation and its principles of justice and equality.

NOTE: The texts in this unit focus on Americans' experiences during slavery and the Civil War. In particular, Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs recount the violence, oppression, and degrading language they and other enslaved Americans experienced. Students may want to discuss their reaction to these disturbing accounts.
(*Amplify has not edited the language in Douglass's published account; the censorship of only select offensive terms was done in the original publication of Douglass's narrative in 1845.*)

Core texts your student will read:

- "Song of Myself" by Walt Whitman
- *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* by Frederick Douglass
- Gettysburg Address
- *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* by Harriet Ann Jacobs
- *The Boys' War* by Jim Murphy
- *A Confederate Girl's Diary* by Sarah Morgan Dawson
- Declaration of Independence
- This unit also includes additional excerpts from abolitionist speeches and memoirs.

What my student will do/learn:

- Students study a few sections of Walt Whitman's "Song of Myself," then imitate his style to write a poem of their own that examines their own sense of self.
- Students read and discuss *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* and *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, exploring how each author describes their own enslavement and crafts their memoir to build an argument in support of abolition.
- Students may work with *The Emancipation Project* Quest, exploring primary source material to enrich their understanding of the unit's historical context.

- Students prepare and deliver an abolitionist speech as part of an Anti-Slavery Fair.
- Students examine the first-hand accounts and images of Civil War boy soldiers in *The Boys' War*, adding to their understanding of and perspectives on the Civil War.
- Students analyze Lincoln's Gettysburg Address by rereading, paraphrasing, and reciting a portion of it to consider the details of his word choice as well as his overall message.
- Students continue to use key classroom routines, including the sharing routine, during which classmates respond to shared writing by noting one effective way the writer used details or evidence.
- Students continue to write in response to prompts 2–3 times weekly, and practice analytic writing in response to text by developing a controlling idea or claim and providing support with details or evidence.
- Students write an end-of-unit essay responding to one of the following prompts: How does Lincoln, in the Gettysburg Address, try to change what his readers/listeners believe about what it means to be dedicated to the American idea that "All men are created equal"? OR How does Douglass, in *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, try to change what his readers believe about what it means to be dedicated to the American idea that "All men are created equal"?

Here are some conversation starters that you can use during this unit to promote discussion and encourage continued learning with your student.

1. After reading Whitman's poem and writing one of your own, what parts of your true self were easy to identify? What aspects required a bit more digging?
2. How did Chadwick Boseman's dramatic readings affect your understanding of and emotional response to Douglass's words?
3. How did reading about Douglass's experiences and analyzing the rhetoric of Senator Calhoun affect your understanding of the world during Douglass's lifetime? Why is it important to read these texts in today's world?
4. Compare *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* to Douglass's memoir. How might each author's style have been effective in furthering the abolitionist movement?
5. What surprised you about the experiences of soldiers in *The Boys' War*?
6. Can you share a piece of writing with me in which you support your idea with evidence from the text? (Provide feedback to your student by finding something in their writing that you can respond to as a reader. For example, "You did a good job of using the phrase "brother's blood" to show how Douglass considers all human beings to be equal, but the slaveholders do not.")
7. Considering the texts you've read in this unit, what does "All men are created equal" mean in the United States? Do you think Americans have been successful in upholding this ideal?

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8C: Science & Science Fiction

In this unit, students read *Gris Grimly's Frankenstein*, a graphic novel that adds engaging illustrations to an abridged version of Mary Shelley's famous 1818 book. Grimly's haunting representations of Frankenstein's creature help students understand and work with some of the novel's central themes: Frankenstein's responsibility for his creation, the role of society in shaping our identity and sense of belonging in the world, and the promises and risks of technological advances. Students trace Victor Frankenstein's level of empathy for his creation throughout the story, rewrite and act out key scenes from the creature's point of view, analyze Shelley's allusions to figures and stories from Greek mythology and Biblical texts, and debate whether Victor owes the creature a companion. At the end of the unit, after research and debate, students write an essay to develop their claim about whether or not Victor's creature should ultimately be considered human.

In the Poetical Science sub-unit, students read two poems, a speech, and excerpts from Chapter 1 of Walter Isaacson's *The Innovators* to compare and contrast the ways in which William Wordsworth, Lord Byron, and Ada Lovelace view man's relationship with technology. The texts in this unit raise the question: Are we the masters of our machines, or are the machines our masters?

Core texts your student will read:

- *Gris Grimly's Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley and Gris Grimly
- Excerpt from Genesis 2, Revised Standard Version
- "Frankenstein (1931) A Man-Made Monster in Grand Guignol Film Story"
- "Prometheus," from *Heroes, Gods and Monsters of the Greek Myths* by Bernard Evslin
- Excerpts from *The Innovators* by Walter Isaacson
- "The Tables Turned" by William Wordsworth
- "Debate on the Frame-Work Bill, in the House of Lords" by Lord Byron
- "All Watched Over by Machines of Loving Grace" by Richard Brautigan

What my students will do/learn:

- Students read and discuss Gris Grimly's graphic novel, using the text and the illustrations to understand both Victor's and the monster's perspectives and to consider their own level of sympathy for the monster compared to Victor's.
- Students review two texts that influenced Mary Shelley in her writing of Frankenstein: the Greek myth "Prometheus" and the account of Adam's creation in Genesis. They reflect on the ways in which these works influenced Shelley's depiction of Victor and his monster.
- Students debate central questions, including whether the creature deserves a companion and whether Dr. Frankenstein or his creature are more deserving of the reader's sympathy.

- Students examine poetry and non-fiction texts written during the same time period that Shelley wrote *Frankenstein* to explore the advances and debates surrounding technology, and to connect these texts to themes in *Frankenstein*.
- Students continue to use key classroom routines, including the sharing routine, during which classmates respond to shared writing by noting one effective way the writer used details or evidence.
- Students continue to write in response to prompts 2–3 times weekly, and practice analytic writing in response to text by developing an idea or claim and providing support with details or evidence.
- Students write an end-of-unit essay responding to the following prompt: Is Frankenstein's creature human?

Here are some conversation starters that you can use during this unit to promote discussion and encourage continued learning with your student.

1. Did you sympathize with Dr. Frankenstein or the creature more? Why?
2. In what ways did the illustrations affect the way you read the *Frankenstein* text? How did it help? Were there any drawbacks? What were your favorite illustrations?
3. What type of responsibility does Frankenstein have for the care and actions of the creature he created?
4. Ada Lovelace's thinking allowed humans to develop computers to be as powerful as they are today. Do you think she would be happy or concerned about how our lives have been impacted by computing technology? Can you share a piece of writing with me in which you used evidence or details from the text to support your controlling idea or claim? (Provide feedback to your student by finding something in their writing that you can respond to as a reader. For example, "I like how you explained that Victor's quote—'I lived in daily fear, lest the monster whom I had created should perpetrate some new wickedness (74)'—shows that he fears the creature rather than cares for it.")
5. How would you describe Frankenstein's creature? In what ways might some claim he is human? How might some view him as inhuman?

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8D: Shakespeare's Romeo & Juliet

In this unit, students read five excerpts from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. The purpose of these lessons is to introduce students to Shakespearean English through a close and engaging reading of these famous scenes from *Romeo and Juliet.* After students have finished the unit, they will have learned how to spot and follow an extended metaphor, discovered how to put Shakespeare into their own words to better understand his meaning, and become curious about—and more prepared for—reading the play in its entirety someday.

Students practice memorizing and reciting lines from the play's famous Prologue over the course of the unit. The lessons also provide multiple opportunities for students to stage their own performances and recitations and to "translate" Shakespeare's words into more contemporary language. In several lessons, students focus on the form of Shakespeare's language, particularly the Shakespearean sonnet. At the end of the unit, students write an essay arguing whether the forces of love or hate are responsible for Romeo's death.

Note: *Romeo and Juliet* depicts the story of two young people whose lives end tragically when, caught up in grief, they decide to take their own lives. Students may be upset by these events and may want to talk about their feelings. It is important to note that Shakespeare makes it clear that Romeo and Juliet make a tragic choice that only brings more sadness.

Core texts your student will read:

- *Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare

What my student will do/learn:

- Students memorize and perform the Prologue to *Romeo and Juliet*.
- Students read, translate, and discuss scenes from *Romeo and Juliet*, performing scenes themselves and comparing and contrasting film versions with their own interpretation of the text.
- Students analyze Shakespeare's use of form and figurative language, creating metaphors that Romeo might use to praise Juliet.
- Students consider how Shakespeare uses a sonnet and figurative language in Romeo and Juliet's first meeting to demonstrate how in sync this young couple is right from the start.
- Students continue to use key classroom routines, including the sharing routine, during which classmates respond to shared writing by noting one effective way the writer used details or evidence.
- Students continue to write in response to prompts 2–3 times weekly, and practice analytic writing in response to text by developing a controlling idea or claim and providing support with details or evidence.

- Students write an end-of-unit essay responding to the following prompt: Did the power of love contribute more to Romeo's death or were the forces of hatred more of an influence on Romeo's death, or both?

Here are some conversation starters that you can use during this unit to promote discussion and encourage continued learning with your student:

1. How does Shakespeare use form and figurative language to communicate the flirtation between Romeo and Juliet? Are Romeo's moves any good? In today's world, in what ways would flirtation look the same? How would it look different?
2. How does the feud between the Capulets and Montagues add to Romeo and Juliet's problems? What could the families have done differently to avoid tragedy? What could Romeo and Juliet have done differently?
3. Will the Capulet and Montague families learn from their tragedy and keep the peace? Why or why not? What message might today's readers take from the events and conclusion of this play?
4. Can you share a piece of writing with me in which you provide evidence from the text to support your controlling idea or claim? (Provide feedback to your student by finding something in their writing that you can respond to as a reader. For example, "I like how you use quotes where both Juliet and Romeo are talking about praying, and then describe that they both know that 'praying' actually refers to kissing which shows they make a good couple.")
5. The end of the play includes the tragic loss of life. Does Romeo die because of the intensity of his love? Or does Romeo die because of the hatred between the Capulets and the Montagues?

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8E: Holocaust: Memory & Meaning

In this unit, students work with a variety of memoir and primary source materials connected to the Holocaust to explore two key questions: How do a society and its people become participants (willingly or indifferently) in such horror? And what is the responsibility of those who experienced, witnessed, participated in, or now learn about these events? The materials are selected to present events from several different perspectives—those of perpetrators, survivors, victims, bystanders, and witnesses. They enable students to begin to understand the strategies Nazis used to influence the mindset of a nation, and to reflect on the human responses to the unfolding of genocide.

First, students analyze "I Cannot Forget," a poem by Holocaust survivor Alexander Kimel that explores the haunting power of memory. Next, students read from the memoir *Shores Beyond Shores*, in which author Irene Butter describes how her Jewish family's happy life in Berlin was slowly destroyed as the Nazis came to power. As a counterpoint, students examine passages from *A Child of Hitler* by Alfons Heck, an Aryan boy who became an enthusiastic member of the Hitler Youth. Students also explore articles and images that show the Nazi propaganda machine in full swing during the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin, where the government sought to showcase the supposed superiority of the Aryan race. Finally, students read additional excerpts from *Child of Hitler*, *Maus*, and *Night*, where participants and survivors trace the descent into darkness: from Kristallnacht, to the creation of the ghettos, and eventually to the death camps. As students explore these materials, they are guided by a series of interviews with Holocaust survivor Irene Butter, who speaks about her family's experiences, the work she does to educate young people about the Holocaust, and her hope that more people stand up against injustice.

Note: The subject of the Holocaust is, by definition, a difficult and disturbing one. Several of the selections in this unit contain images that are both graphic and potentially upsetting for students. Be sure to preview selections and prepare students for what they will read. There are many excellent resources outside Amplify to support your work with this unit if needed, including the Texas Holocaust and Genocide Commission.

Core texts your student will read:

- "I Cannot Forget" by Alexander Kimel
- *A Child of Hitler* by Alfons Heck
- "Helene Mayer, Fencing Champ, Says She'll Try for Olympics" from *Jewish Daily Bulletin*
- "100,000 Hail Hitler; U.S. Athletes Avoid Nazi Salute to Him" by Frederick T. Birchall from *The New York Times*
- "Jesse Owens' Olympic Triumph Over Time and Hitlerism" from *Ebony* by Lerone Bennett, Jr.
- Excerpts from *Maus I: My Father Bleeds History* by Art Spiegelman
- Excerpts from *Night* by Elie Wiesel
- Excerpts from *Shores Beyond Shores* by Irene Butter

What my student will do/learn:

- Students analyze anti-Semitic propaganda and other techniques that Nazis used to turn Germany against its Jewish citizens.
- Students explore various first- and second-hand materials, including video interviews with a Holocaust survivor, memoir, and a graphic novel, to better understand the evolution of the Holocaust and the actions and reactions of those involved.
- Students continue to actively discuss their responses connected to classroom activities in order to share their range of perspectives and refine their understanding.
- Students continue to write in response to prompts 2–3 times weekly, and practice analytic writing in response to text by developing a controlling idea or claim and providing support with details or evidence.
- Students end their exploration of these accounts of the Holocaust by writing a reflective poem that presents the images and ideas from the unit they found most powerful.
- Students write an end-of-unit essay responding to the following prompt: The Holocaust did not happen overnight. As the Nazis laid the groundwork for what would eventually become known as the Holocaust, they used a number of strategies to isolate, oppress, and control the Jewish population of Europe, and to convince others to go along with their plan.
  Choose two of the strategies that stood out to you as you explored this unit. Using examples from the texts and images you analyzed, describe each strategy and the impact it had.

Here are some conversation starters that you can use during this unit to promote discussion and encourage continued learning with your student.

1. According to the texts you've read in this unit, why is remembering important? What memories stood out to you as you read these texts? How might these memories, and those like them, help to ensure events like the Holocaust don't happen again?
2. Which text, image, or video had the greatest impact on you? Why?
3. Can you share a piece of writing with me in which you provide evidence from the text to support your controlling idea or claim? (Provide feedback to your student by finding something in their writing that you can respond to as a reader. For example, "The details you used about the Olympic rules helped me understand how Mayer felt forced to join the German team.")
4. What were a couple of the strategies that the Nazis used to lay the groundwork for the Holocaust? What were the impacts of these strategies on those they sought to isolate, oppress, or control?

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8F: The Space Race Collection

From the late 1950s to the mid-1970s, the United States and the Soviet Union were locked in a tense race against time where only one question mattered: Who would be the first to dominate space exploration? This competition would become known as the "Space Race," and its effects can still be felt today in events such as the current global rush to explore the planet Mars. In this Collection, students explore primary documents and conduct independent research to better understand this space race between two of the world's superpowers. The dramatic story of the space race offers students a rich research topic to explore as they build information literacy skills and learn how to construct their own research questions and explore the Internet for answers. Students also participate in a Socratic seminar in which they rely on their research to examine the complicated issues inherent in the history of the space race.

Throughout these activities, students conduct research to develop a deep understanding of this unique international competition. Each student is assigned a cosmonaut or astronaut from the space race era. They research their cosmonaut or astronaut and write entries into their space blog from their person's point of view. As students reach the end of the unit, they synthesize all of the skills they've developed to tackle a culminating research assignment—part essay, part multimedia project.

Core texts your student will read:

- The Space Race: An Introduction by *Lapham's Quarterly* editors
- Excerpt: "Sputnik" from *Rocket Boys* by Homer Hickam
- Excerpt: "And a Dog Shall Lead Them" from *A Ball, a Dog, and a Monkey* by Michael D'Antonio
- Memorandum for the Vice President by John F. Kennedy
- Excerpt: President Kennedy's Address at Rice University, September 12, 1962
- Excerpt: "A Seagull in Flight" from *Into That Silent Sea* by Francis French and Colin Burgess
- Excerpt: "First to Fly" from *Into That Silent Sea* by Francis French and Colin Burgess
- "In Event of Moon Disaster" by William Safire
- Excerpt: "Dreaming of a Moonage" from *Moondust* by Andrew Smith
- "Buzz Aldrin on His Lunar Home, the Eagle" from *The Wall Street Journal* by Marc Myers
- Excerpt: "Smooth as a Peeled Egg" from *Two Sides of the Moon: Our Story of the Cold War Space Race* by David Scott and Alexei Leonov with Christine Toomey
- Excerpt: Preface from *Flight: My Life in Mission Control* by Christopher C. Kraft, Jr. and James L. Schefter
- "What the Moon Rocks Tell Us" from *National Geographic* by Kenneth F. Weaver
- Excerpt: "You Are Here" from *Pale Blue Dot* by Carl Sagan
- Katherine Johnson: Trailblazer and Brilliant Mathematician
- Excerpt: "Life on Mars to Become a Reality in 2023, Dutch Firm Claims" from *The Guardian* by Karen McVeigh

What my student will do/learn:

- Students conduct fun and "low-stakes" scavenger hunts to become familiar with the range of texts and images included in this unit.
- Students learn how to construct research questions and identify appropriate and relevant websites and Internet sources for answers.

- Students assume the identity of an astronaut or cosmonaut during the space race, then research their experience and write blog entries from their point of view.
- Students establish expectations, prepare questions for, and engage in a Socratic seminar, discussing the circumstances and consequences of the space race.
- Students continue to write in response to prompts 2–3 times weekly, and practice analytic writing in response to text by developing a controlling idea or claim and providing support with details or evidence.
- Students write an end-of-unit essay responding to one of the following prompts:
    a. Research Option 1: Argumentative Essay: Research and discover what the Soviets and the Americans were trying to understand when they sent animals into space. Was animal testing necessary? Was it fair or moral to send animals into space for research purposes? Could the scientists have found the answers they were looking for without sacrificing animals? If so, how? Research sources in the Collection and on the Internet as you collect evidence and prove your case. Write an argumentative essay persuading your reader of your way of thinking. Be sure to include a list of the resources you used in your research.
    b. Research Option 2: Informative Essay: How did Katherine Johnson and the other women who worked with her at NASA impact the Space Race? Write an informative essay about Katherine Johnson and the other key women who worked at NASA during the Space Race era. Who were the other key women who worked with Katherine Johnson and what roles did they play? What barriers did they face? How was the Space Race impacted by their work?
- Students also create an interactive timeline to share their essay research with the class.

Here are some conversation starters that you can use during this unit to promote discussion and encourage continued learning with your student:

1. As you worked to evaluate sources, what did you notice about the credible websites? What advice might you give a friend looking for information on the Internet?
2. What was the most surprising thing you learned when you wrote blog entries by someone from the space race? How did putting yourself in their shoes affect the way you understood different events and experiences?
3. What are some facts you learned about the circumstances, consequences, and/or participants of the space race?
4. What is one way our approach to space exploration has changed since the space race? What is one way it remains the same?
5. Can you share one of your blog entries that you wrote as a cosmonaut or astronaut involved in the space race? (Provide feedback to your student by finding something in their writing that you can respond to as a reader. For example, “I like how you describe the overwhelming awe you felt when you stepped out on the moon with Neil Armstrong. Adding those specific details really show me how you were feeling.”)