



# DISTRICT 75: HIGH SCHOOL UNITS OF STUDY



**HOW DOES AN AUTHOR USE THE ELEMENTS  
OF LITERATURE TO CREATE AN  
INTERESTING STORY?**

A FOUR WEEK READING AND WRITING UNIT IN ANALYZING  
LITERATURE AND WRITING A CRITICAL ESSAY

## **Acknowledgments**

The ***District 75 Units of Study for Grades K-12*** were created as a guideline for teachers implementing the Reader's and Writer's Workshop within their classrooms.

The mission of the District 75 Literacy Team is to enhance literacy programs in all District 75 schools so that students may become lifelong readers and writers. The District Literacy Team supports the implementation of the New York City Performance Standards in English Language Arts, the Department of Education's Scope and Sequence K-8 as well as the Balanced Literacy Initiative.

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## INTRODUCTION

In order to adequately express ideas in writing based on literature, students must have the tools to analyze the books they read. In addition, the tools used to comprehend ideas in print are useful in independent reading, both in and out of the school setting. The fact remains that if you cannot learn how to read by third grade, many school programs do not offer the support to help you read to learn. The results of situations like these are seen everyday in the classrooms of District 75 High Schools.

In order to provide support to teachers so they can scaffold instruction for students with special needs, this unit entitled – *How does an author use the elements of literature to create an interesting story?* – serves as an introduction to literature through a progressive approach. Each week teachers and students explore a different element of literature and students are required to write a paragraph using that element as the critical lens. Our intent is that each weekly paragraph will be joined together with an introduction and conclusion based on a pre-selected essay question. Therefore, by the end of this unit students will produce a critical **response to a piece of literature** that evolves over a four-week period. Students will have written a multi-paragraph essay and will clearly understand the critical steps for completion of such. This time frame gives teachers the freedom to closely examine their students writing and to reinforce the writing process that was taught in the September writing unit. Students can take time to revise and edit each of their paragraphs while they are exploring a particular element of literature. Specific instructions and supports to implement this writing strategy are located in the Supports for Struggling Readers and Writers section.

Our reason for designing a four-week unit in which each student is required to complete only one essay deserves explanation. First, it is of utmost importance that our students are able to identify terms such as; *character, setting, mood, plot and theme* in order to meet the standards required by our Regents and Regents Competency Examinations. In addition, this knowledge is a basic requirement for a credit-bearing course in English Language Arts. Many of our students reach high school unable to do this. In addition, the ability to write a multi-paragraph essay is a task that the majority of our students cannot accomplish, either. In designing this unit slowly and progressively, we are offering a methodology to overcome the obstacles that each of you faces with your students. It is important to note that the skills derived from completing this unit must be repeated and

reinforced for our students to be successful. In other words, our students must continue writing essays so that this knowledge becomes embedded over time. To this end, we are including a series of cloze procedures and graphic organizers that can be utilized to create mind maps for our students who have difficulty forming their own.

We believe that this formulaic approach will reap benefits if completed over time. Of course, the manner in which you approach this daunting task and the rewards that you develop for your student writers will significantly affect your success. We encourage you to support your students in the creative efforts they undertake. District 75 appreciates your commitment to our students and wants you to know that in the end it is your dedication that will make a difference for them.

## **STANDARDS AND ASSESSMENT**

Through a variety of assessments, teachers will continually assess their students and plan meaningfully to meet the identified needs of their students. Assessments are incorporated throughout the unit to help establish a reflective and continuous assessment cycle. Suggested assessments include but are not limited to: writing portfolios, Readers' and Writers' Notebooks, graphic organizers, rubrics, and the final published piece.

The following High School Standards for English Language Arts are addressed throughout this Unit of Study:

**Standard 1:** Students will read, write, listen and speak for information and understanding.

**Standard 2:** Students will read, write, listen and speak for literary response and expression.

**Standard 3:** Students will read, write, listen and speak for critical analysis and evaluation.

**Standard 4:** Students will read, write, listen and speak for social interaction.

Though the presentation of skills for ninth, tenth, eleventh and twelfth grade students with disabilities may be similar, the actual choice of mentor texts remains up to the teacher. Suggested adaptations including booklists assure that this unit can be incorporated into a high school credit-bearing course in American Literature, World Literature or British Literature.

## **SUPPORTS FOR STRUGGLING READERS**

This unit will include a number of graphic organizers to support readers while they are completing a study of the elements of literature. These graphic organizers help students isolate text and highlight information that is important. Moreover, many of these graphic organizers can also be used to support the writing of a critical essay. The graphic organizers provided include:

#### Story Map

- A story map helps students diagram the action that takes place in the story. The map also highlights the elements of plot that students may be routinely asked for on standardized assessments. Therefore, by diagramming the plot using a story map, students are reinforcing their understanding of these difficult terms.

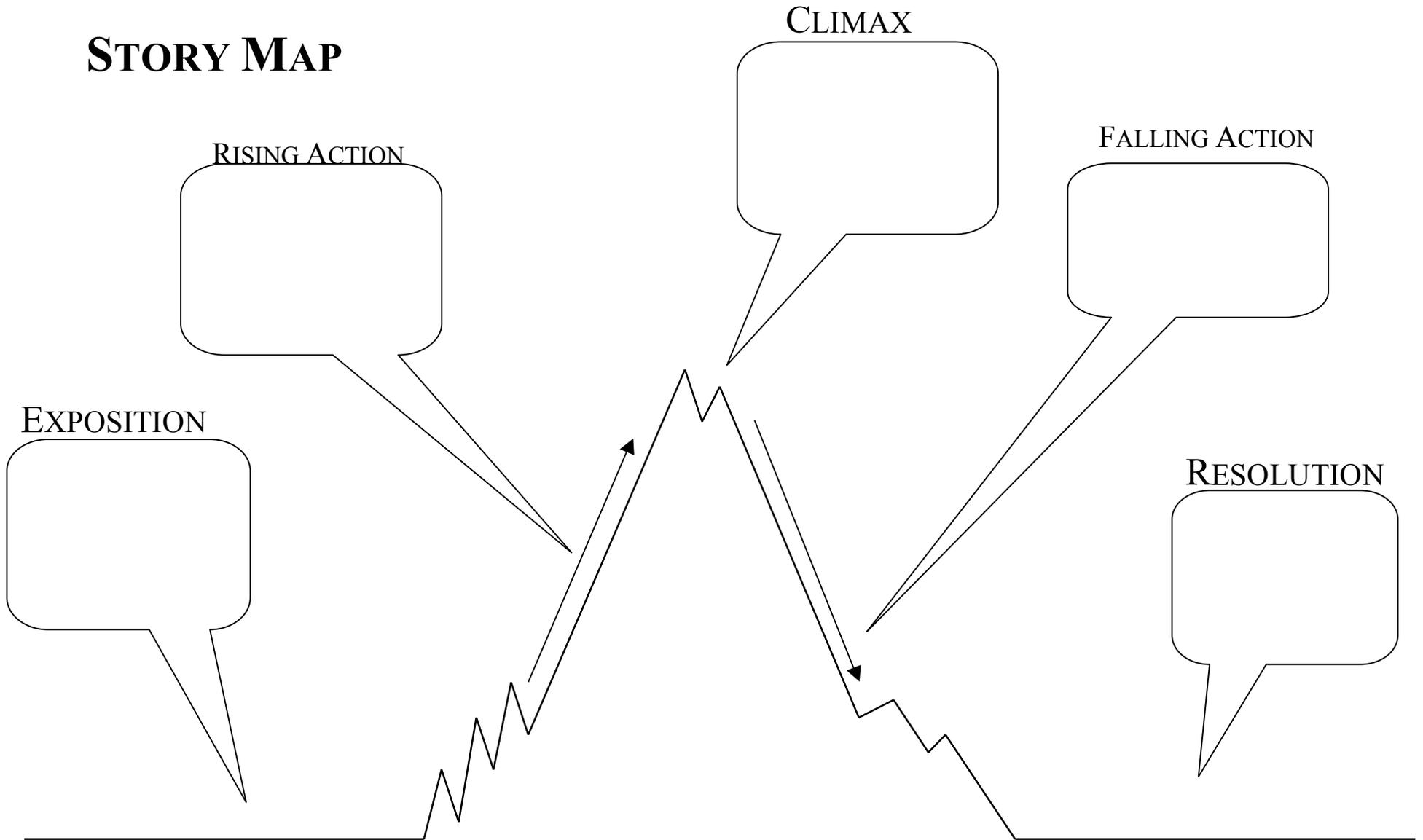
#### Sequence of Events

- A sequence of events chart shows the action of a story in chronological order but does not require students to be familiar with more advanced vocabulary related to plot.

#### Quotation/Response Chart

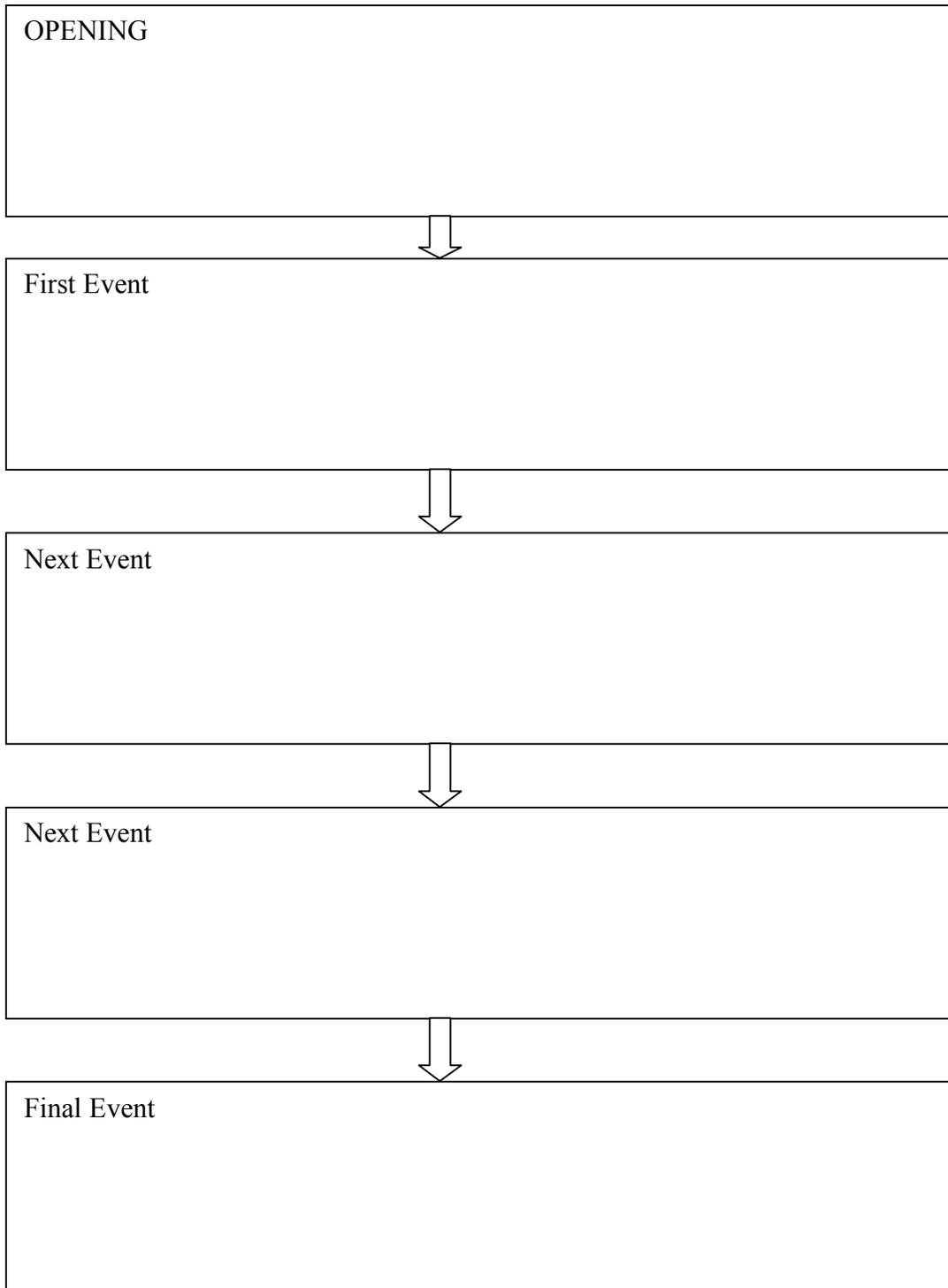
- A quotation/response chart assists students in the selection of a particular quote and allows the students to elaborate on the quote using pre-selected prompts. This type of chart can be used with students who are having difficulty understanding the text because it helps them make a personal connection with text. Furthermore, students would be able to cite quotations in their critical essay if they use this support consistently.

# STORY MAP



## USE A SEQUENCE CHART

Organize the events in your story by using the chart below



## QUOTATION/RESPONSE CHART

Title of Text: \_\_\_\_\_

Author: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Quotation</b> On this side copy the quotation: (word for word)	<b>Response</b> On this side write your response:
	What do you feel?
	What do you like or dislike?
	What do you agree with?
	In which paragraph of your essay does this quotation belong?

## SUPPORTS FOR STRUGGLING WRITERS

### Constructing A Progressive Essay

The suggested topic for the progressive essay is: ***How does an author use the elements of literature to create an interesting story?***

The strategy below is designed for our high school students who struggle with writing a competency-based essay. Our ideas are based on the research conducted on the human brain and compiled by Marilee Sprenger in *Learning and Memory: The Brain in Action*. Several important ideas are at the forefront of this research. First, students with cognitive processing difficulties need mind maps to help them construct meaning from print. Second, memory lanes in the brain become stronger with repetition and reinforcement of academic tasks. Bearing this in mind, we have designed what we call a progressive essay. Students will be immersed in the process of writing one essay in a progressive fashion during this four-week unit.

Each week will begin with an essential question that focuses students on the specific element of literature that is under investigation that week. With guidance, students will develop a paragraph related to that element which will become a part of their essay. The elements are: character, mood, setting, plot and theme. In addition, there will be activities for writing an introduction and conclusion, as well as, using quotations from text. We will suggest an essay topic and a formulaic approach, which can be used successfully with most students. In some cases, a teacher may modify or even ‘up the ante’ for the more competent writer.

Writing an essay is very much like building an apartment building or house. You, the writer, are the builder. For your construction project to be successful, all the elements must be in place. First, you need a plan. The plan must scaffold activities with the passage of time in order for you to meet your goal. In this four week essay unit we will be building a “house of ideas” made up of paragraphs. Try to visualize each paragraph as one floor in an apartment building or house. Each week we will develop one paragraph or one floor of the structure. Teachers are encouraged to provide one or more of the strategies suggested below each week to assist students who struggle to write paragraphs. This type of scaffolded approach helps our students internalize organizational formats that they can access when necessary.

A poster is attached that will help you to visualize the metaphor of the apartment building for scaffolding writing.

The steps to independence are:

1. Cloze procedure for the student who struggles to write sentences or paragraphs
2. Graphic organizer for the student who needs a “mind map”
3. Outline format for the student to plan a first draft
4. Editing checklist

\*Teachers may need to move students through the progression of steps from 1- 4 in order to improve their writing skills. Repetition of these steps will help students move toward independence. Samples of each strategy are included in this unit.

## APARTMENT BUILDING MODEL OF SCAFFOLDING WRITING

**Week 3**  
**Up the stairs to the third floor**  
Paragraph 4: How does the action help to reveal author's purpose?

**Week 2**  
**Moving up to the second floor**  
Paragraph 3: How does an author make different settings and moods come alive?

**Week 1**  
**Entering the first floor**  
Paragraph 2: How does an author create interesting characters?



**Week 4**  
**Adding a basement and putting on the roof**  
Paragraph- How do I write an introduction and a conclusion and add a favorite quote?

## CURRICULUM MAP

### *Reading the Curriculum Map*

Much work has been done to create curriculum maps, but little time is spent on how to look at them. Each week of the curriculum map is divided into sections as follows:

<b>WEEK ONE:</b>  WHAT TOOLS CAN WE USE TO GATHER INFORMATION ON CHARACTERS?	Readers begin to approach elements of character by recording character traits from familiar video or visual aides	Readers experience characterization through music with lyrics. Record character traits on graphic organizer	Readers read and record notes about their character on a graphic organizer while reading	<i>Readers practice protocols, roles and responsibilities for book clubs</i>	Readers in book clubs preview the book to examine text features
	Writers formalize a schedule for writing, review their writing portfolio checklist and read their rubrics		Writers illustrate and personalize their portfolio		Writers setup and organize their book clubs while reviewing their criteria

- The first line lets you know which week this chart is referencing. In addition, the unit is presented in a specific order, but should not be seen as prescriptive.
- Following the week number is the week title phrased in the form of an essential question. Each teacher should adapt the lessons to meet the needs of their students.
- The first row of the table highlights the Reader’s Workshop teaching points for the week.
- The second row shows the Writer’s Workshop teaching points for the week. The second row is shaded to differentiate it from the first.
- The teaching points in italics are developed more fully in the lessons to support the unit of study.

<b>WEEK ONE:</b>  WHAT TECHNIQUES DO AUTHORS USE TO CREATE COMPLEX CHARACTERS?	Readers identify main and supporting characters in a short text.	<b>Readers practice using the characterization chart by using authentic models from personal experience (family members, friends)</b>  Name of character-  <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Looks like...</th> <th>Feels like...</th> <th>Acts like...</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td> </td> <td> </td> <td> </td> </tr> <tr> <td> </td> <td> </td> <td> </td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Looks like...	Feels like...	Acts like...							Readers select a character from the text to describe and list characteristics to support their choice using the character chart, “looks like, acts like, feels like from previous day.	Readers present their characters in an informal share using a number of prompts.
	Looks like...	Feels like...	Acts like...											
Writers familiarize themselves with the elements of literature essay graphic organizer discussing the format with peers.	Writers review the construction of an effective paragraph using a graphic organizer: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Main idea</li> <li>○ Supporting details</li> </ul>	<b>Writers are introduced to cloze procedure to create a paragraph</b>	Writers complete their paragraph on the character they selected using cloze procedure.	Writers begin assembling progressive essay by adding first paragraph.										

**The goals of the first week of this unit include:**

- Beginning to work on the essay question: *How does an author use the elements of literature to create an interesting text?*
- Identifying characteristics that authors use to describe characters
- Selecting a character and justifying the choice
- Building effective essays by creating one paragraph at a time
- Reviewing construction of a paragraph
- Understanding how cloze procedure can help develop paragraphs that flow
- Creating the second paragraph for the final essay

<b>WEEK TWO:</b>  HOW DO MOOD AND SETTING ADD DESCRIPTIVE ELEMENTS TO A STORY?	Readers begin examining the elements of setting and mood through the use of a double entry journal		Readers brainstorm and list descriptive words that add meaning to print. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>List feelings/ what is an adjective?</li> <li>What is an adverb?</li> </ol>	Readers engage in cloze procedure exercise in order to see how substitution of adjectives affects meaning in text.	Fishbowl: Readers choose powerful parts of the text to read aloud and then identify the mood or setting described.  What makes this description powerful?
	Quote	Page #			
	Writers choose a setting that they believe adds to the interest of the story.	Writers are introduced to a Thesaurus and other techniques to retrieve the words they need in order to write meaningful sentences.	Writers begin to develop the next paragraph using the strategy appropriate for their needs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cloze</li> <li>Graphic Org.</li> <li>Outline</li> </ul>	Writers rewrite and edit their first draft of the second paragraph.	Writers conjoin the first two paragraphs they wrote. Read aloud in pairs/ give feedback/make corrections and add to portfolio

**The goals of the second week of this unit include:**

- Continuing to work on the essay question: How does an author use the elements of literature to create an interesting text?
- Examining the function of adjectives and adverbs in text
- Learning to recognize powerful descriptions
- Using a Thesaurus to broaden vocabulary
- Identifying specific support structure needed to write a paragraph

<b>WEEK THREE:</b>  WHY IS THE ORDER OF EVENTS IN A STORY IMPORTANT?  HOW DOES THE AUTHOR CONVEY HIS/HER PURPOSE?	Readers track the course of a story using a story map.  Practice in Sequencing	Readers identify the characteristics of rising action and falling action in a story by diagramming the action.	Readers are introduced to terminology: Plot Theme Foreshadowing Flashback Open ended	Readers examine author's purpose:  What is the author's message? How does the author use all the elements to get his message across? Do you agree with the author's point of view?	Readers go back to the story map and the diagram of action. Readers note the spots where the author's message began to develop as the story progressed.
	Writers select the important events to include in their paragraph from the story map and diagram they created.  Which are main ideas and which are supporting details?	Writers begin to examine author's purpose by responding to prompts that encourage deeper thinking.	Writers begin to create a first draft of paragraph 3.  Writers are given appropriate supports: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cloze</li> <li>• Graphic Org.</li> <li>• Outline</li> </ul>	Writers revise and edit paragraph in pairs.	Writers conjoin the first three paragraphs of their essay by adding the 3 <sup>rd</sup> paragraph and add to portfolio.  Teachers define and model the term, the <i>body of the essay</i> .

**The goals of the third week of this unit include:**

- *Completing the body of the essay: How does an author use the elements of literature to create an interesting story?*
- Sequencing events in a story
- Becoming familiar with terminology related to plot and theme
- Utilizing an effective method of organization for writing the third paragraph
- Beginning to put their essay together and sharing with a partner

<b>WEEK FOUR:</b>  HOW DOES AN AUTHOR EXPRESS HIMSELF?	Readers examine favorite lines in text and record on graphic organizer:  What does my character say that shows his personality traits? Is one setting very visual? Why? How does the author make the story scary/sad/happy, etc?		Readers review their notes to answer: Is there a particular quotation that I would like to add to my introduction? body? conclusion?	Readers, in pairs, choose a read aloud to present to class from their book/text.	Readers/Writers celebrate success. Published essays are posted in class. Students read papers and perform Read Alouds.
	Writers create an introduction to their essay using a graphic organizer or cloze procedure.	Writers use a graphic organizer or cloze procedure to write a concluding paragraph.	Writers add transitional words between paragraphs  Writers put it all together and write first complete draft	Writers revise/edit/type or write neatly to publish their work.	
HOW DOES A WRITER PUT IT ALL TOGETHER?					

**The goals of the fourth week of this unit include:**

- *Completing the essay: How does an author use the elements of literature to create an interesting story?*
- Choosing quotations from text to insert in the essay
- Writing an introduction and conclusion
- Completing the essay with a critical lens
- Performing a selected Read Aloud from text
- Publishing and celebrating success

**Unit of Study: Reading: Understanding Literature**      **Date:**

**Title of Minilesson:** How does an author create interesting characters?

**Intention:** Students practice conducting a *character autopsy* by using authentic models from personal experience.

**Materials:** Model character chart, individual charts for students

**Connection:** Who knows what an autopsy is? Discuss the reasons for an autopsy, etc. Activate schema by mentioning the TV show, CSI. You may not realize it, but this is something we do all the time. When we interact with our friends and family we often describe other people in our conversation! Sometimes our descriptions have a lot of details and description.

**Teaching:** Today we will think of somebody we know and conduct a character autopsy on this person to write a descriptive paragraph. By doing this, we will get better at selecting and describing characters in the books we read in school, as well as, independently. We will do automatic character autopsies when we read.

Teacher models character autopsy chart (see attachment)

Students are given opportunities to share ideas. Teacher completes chart and reviews with students.

**Active Engagement:** Students are then given individual character autopsy charts and a series of prompts to complete the chart. Students are asked to select a character with whom they are acquainted to describe in this activity. Students work individually on responses with guidance from teacher and paraprofessional.

**Link:** As I examine your autopsies, I can see that you are able to describe your character very vividly. This is what an author wants you to be able to do when you read a book. Tomorrow, we will be able to use this character autopsy chart to describe a character you select from your reading.

**Debrief:** Let's come together in a group and share our autopsies of the characters we analyzed today.

Questions to consider:

How deep did we go?

Is there more to reveal?



## Conducting a Character Autopsy

**Name of Book:**

**Name of Character:**

Looks like.....	Feels like.....	Acts like.....

### *Prompts:*

#### **Looks like.....**

- What color are the eyes and hair?
- How tall is this person?
- Does he/she remind me of someone?
- How does he/she dress?
- What else about his appearance makes him unique?
- Do I like the way this person looks?

#### **Feels like.....**

- Can you tell how this person feels by what he/she says?
- Can you tell how this person feels by how he/she thinks?
- Can you tell how this person feels by how he/she behaves?
- Body language?
- Facial expression?
- Posture?
- How this person interacts with others?
- Have you ever acted this way?

#### **Acts like.....**

- What does this person do or not do?
- What do his actions reveal about his personality?
- Why does this person act this way?
- What would you do if you were in his shoes?
- What do you think he/she will do next?

**Unit of Study: Writing: Understanding Literature**      **Date:**

**Title of Minilesson:** Using my character autopsy to write a paragraph using cloze procedure.

**Intention:** Students begin the essay: How do authors use the elements of literature to create an interesting story?

- Struggling writers can complete a paragraph about characterization using this strategy

**Materials:** Model cloze procedure chart, individual cloze charts for students, completed character autopsies

**Connection:** Today we are going to begin writing a “progressive essay” Does anyone see a word in the word, progressive? Elicit the answer, *progress*. When you make progress what do you do? After students are clear tell them that during this 4 week unit they will slowly make progress by writing an essay from start to finish.

**Teaching:** An essay is like building a house. Each paragraph is like adding a floor to a house! In our essay we want to demonstrate how an author uses the elements of literature to create an interesting story. So far this week we have been examining the element of characterization.

Today we will use a strategy called cloze procedure to write a paragraph about a character. We will include several main ideas and supporting details.

Teacher models cloze procedure paragraph and students begin to share ideas to fill in the missing words. Teacher reinforces the importance of creating main ideas and supporting details.

**Active Engagement:** Students are then asked to refer back to their character chart that should be complete. This is the source the student will use to write his paragraph. In addition, a cloze procedure paragraph geared toward characterization will be given to each student. Students use the appropriate information to fill in the missing words.  
**ENCOURAGE CREATIVITY!!**

**Link:** You each have the beginnings of a strong paragraph with descriptive details about your character. That is because you conducted a character autopsy! If you do this, your characters will be very complete.

**Debrief:** Let's come together in a group and read our first drafts. When each of us reads, let's close our eyes and try to visualize the person who is being described.

**Unit of Study: Understanding Literature**

**Date:**

**Title of Minilesson:** Using adjectives to alter meaning in text

**Intention:**

Readers will understand adjectives as a part of speech.

Writers will use cloze procedure to learn how to write descriptive sentences.

**Materials:** Model cloze passages, individual cloze procedure passages for students

**Connection:** Yesterday, we brainstormed a list of descriptive words. Today, we will practice using these words in sentences. We will examine how changing an adjective completely alters the meaning of a sentence. Moreover, we will examine how adjectives set the mood.

**Teaching:**

Use prompts to discuss and model on board:

1. What purpose does an adjective fulfill in a sentence? (vivid description)
2. Where is an adjective placed in a sentence? (before noun) (An important note is that ELLs may not initially understand this concept since in many other languages adjectives follow the noun)

Let's look at the list of adjectives we created yesterday. Teacher exhibits list and model sentences with blanks before the nouns in a sentence. Students choose from list and insert words. Teacher discusses how manipulating the adjectives changes meaning.

**Active Engagement:** Now you will have an opportunity to create vivid paragraphs by choosing your own words. Students are presented with a series of pre-selected paragraphs written in cloze. Students work individually and create paragraphs inserting different adjectives in blanks.

**Link:** As I watch each of you go through this procedure, it is interesting to see how different your paragraphs are! When you read the next chapter of the book think how the author could have changed the meaning by inserting a variety of descriptive words.

**Debrief:** Let's all share the results of this exercise with the class. As each of you reads the same paragraph notice how the choice of descriptive words alters meaning. Examine this question:

Is the meaning of a sentence always radically changed?  
How can you alter meaning slightly?

## DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION AND ADAPTATIONS

The following publishers support differentiated instruction by providing texts on multiple levels as well as in multiple formats: adapted books, graphic novels, audiobooks, CDs, DVDs, computer-based reading programs, graphic organizers, rubrics, sophisticated picture books, etc.

### Globe Fearon

- [www.agsglobe.com](http://www.agsglobe.com)
- Adapted classics, graphic novels and audiotapes
- Pacemaker series: World Literature and American Literature
- High Interest-Low Level literature

### Capstone Press

- [www.capstonepress.com](http://www.capstonepress.com)
- Exceptional graphic novels and student friendly materials
- Computer-based interactive books

### Perma-bound

- [www.perma-bound.com](http://www.perma-bound.com)
- Hard-bound adapted classics and novel guides
- Thematic libraries

### Don Johnston

- [www.donjohnston.com](http://www.donjohnston.com)
- Start-to-finish books
- High interest, low level reading program based on-line

### Holt, Rinehart and Winston

- [www.hrw.com](http://www.hrw.com)
- Great resource for rubrics, graphic organizers, and lesson plans

## Websites for Instructional Support

### Booklists:

<http://www.teachersfirst.com/read-sel.cfm>

<http://www.teachingbooks.net/> - very comprehensive, must register  
\*All NYC educators have free access.

<http://www.nysedregents.org/testing/engre/regenteng.html> - access to  
English Regents Examinations/supplemental texts for units

### Graphic Organizers:

[http://www.edhelper.com/teachers/graphic\\_organizers.htm](http://www.edhelper.com/teachers/graphic_organizers.htm)

<http://www.teachervision.fen.com/graphic-organizers/printable/6293.html>

<http://www.enchantedlearning.com/graphicorganizers/>

<http://www.region15.org/curriculum/graphicorg.html>

<http://www.graphicorganizers.com/>

<http://content.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=2983>

<http://teach-nology.com/worksheets/graphic/>

[http://www.educationoasis.com/curriculum/graphic\\_organizers.htm](http://www.educationoasis.com/curriculum/graphic_organizers.htm)

### Cloze Procedure:

<http://olc.spsd.sk.ca/DE/PD/instr/strats/cloze/index.html>

<http://www.princetonol.com/groups/lvame/tutors/cloze.html>

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