

High School (9-12) Literary Writing Prompts

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IntelliMetric® Prompts

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

A Literary Hero

Many pieces of literature often feature a character who exemplifies heroic qualities, like nobility and courage. Think about a literary character and how he/she exhibits the character traits of a hero.

In a well-developed essay, discuss the events and circumstances that reveal the character's heroic qualities and why they make him/her a hero. Be sure to provide specific, relevant examples from the text to support your response.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Reading Literature Standard 2 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

A Literary Work with Multiple Themes

Most, if not all, pieces of literature have more than one theme or central idea. For example, *The Great Gatsby*, by F. Scott Fitzgerald, conveys the themes of the decline of the American Dream in the 1920s and the focus on material wealth and excess.

In a well-developed essay, discuss and analyze two or more themes expressed in a particular literary work, including specifically how these themes develop over the course of the text. Remember to provide examples and textual evidence for support in your response.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Reading Literature Standard 2 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

"A Sound of Thunder" by Ray Bradbury

Through his short story "A Sound of Thunder," Ray Bradbury attempts to convey to the reader an important lesson about human behavior.

After carefully reading the story, write a multi-paragraph essay in which you examine the lesson Bradbury was trying to express through this tale. Make sure to include examples and details from the text to support your answer.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

An Epic Hero

An epic hero is a character that possesses courage, strength, and a desire to achieve immortality through heroic actions. Select a fictional character that exemplifies these qualities and explain why this person can be considered an epic hero. Make sure to include specific details and examples to support your claim.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Reading Literature Standard 4 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Analysis of a Prose Passage: Ralph Waldo Emerson

Read the prose passage carefully and write an essay in which you describe the attitude of the narrator toward nature. Make specific references to the text and show how the author uses figurative language, comparison, and contrast to convey this attitude.

Passage:

To go into solitude, a man needs to retire as much from his chamber as from society. I am not solitary whilst I read and write, though nobody is with me. But if a man would be alone, let him look at the stars.

The stars awaken a certain reverence, because though always present, they are inaccessible; but all natural objects make a kindred [similar] impression, when the mind is open to their influence.

Nature never wears a mean appearance. Neither does the wisest man extort her secret, and lose his curiosity by finding out all her perfection. Nature never became a toy to a wise spirit. The flowers, the animals, the mountains, reflected the wisdom of his best hour, as much as they had delighted the simplicity of his childhood.

To speak truly, few adult persons can see nature. Most persons do not see the sun. At least they have a very superficial seeing. The sun illuminates only the eye of the man, but shines into the eye and the heart of the child. The lover of nature is he whose inward and outward senses are still truly adjusted to each other; who has retained the spirit of infancy even into the era of manhood. His intercourse [communication] with heaven and earth becomes part of his daily food.

In the presence of nature a wild delight runs through the man, in spite of real sorrows. Nature says, -he is my creature, and maugre [in spite of] all his impertinent griefs, he shall be glad with me. Not the sun or the summer alone, but every hour and season yields its tribute of delight; for every hour and change corresponds to and authorizes a different state of the mind, from breathless noon to grimmest midnight. Nature is a setting that fits equally well a comic or a mourning piece. In good health, the air is a cordial of incredible virtue.

Crossing a bare common [park or grassy square], in snow puddles, at twilight, under a clouded sky, without having in my thoughts any occurrence of special good fortune, I have enjoyed a perfect exhilaration. I am glad to the brink of fear. In the woods, too, a man casts off his years, as the snake his slough [dead skin] and at what period soever of life is always a child. In the woods is perpetual youth. Within these plantations of God, a decorum and sanctity reign, a perennial festival is dressed, and the guest sees not how he should tire of them in a thousand years. In the woods, we return to reason and faith. There I feel that nothing can befall me in life-no disgrace, no calamity (leaving me my eyes), which nature cannot repair. Standing on the bare ground-my head bathed by the blithe [joyous] air and uplifted into infinite space-all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eyeball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or parcel of God. The name of the nearest friend sounds then foreign and accidental: to be brothers, to be acquaintances, master or

servant, is then a trifle and a disturbance. I am the lover of uncontained and immortal beauty.

In the wilderness, I find something more dear and connate [inborn or innate] than in streets or villages. In the tranquil landscape, and especially in the distant line of the horizon, man beholds somewhat as beautiful as his own nature.

Yet it is certain that the power to produce this delight does not reside in nature, but in man, or in a harmony of both. It is necessary to use these pleasures with great temperance. For nature is not always tricked in holiday attire, but the same scene which yesterday breathed perfume and glittered as for the frolic of the nymphs is overspread with melancholy to-day. Nature always wears the colors of the spirit.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Reading Literature Standard 3 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Analysis of an Author’s Choices in a Literary Work

In any given literary work, whether it be a novel, play, or short story, authors have to make a variety of choices regarding where the story will be set, how the plot or action is ordered (i.e., chronological vs. flashbacks), and how the characters are introduced and developed.

In a well-developed essay, analyze the author’s choices of elements in a specific literary work while also evaluating the impact that such choices have had on the success of the text as a whole. Be sure to provide examples and textual evidence to support your analysis.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Analysis of Housman's "When I was one-and-twenty..."

"When I was one-and-twenty..."

by A. E. Housman (1859-1936)

When I was one-and-twenty
 I heard a wise man say,
 'Give crowns and pounds and guineas
 But not your heart away;
 Give pearls away and rubies
 But keep your fancy free.'
 But I was one-and-twenty,
 No use to talk to me.

When I was one-and-twenty
 I heard him say again,
 'The heart out of the bosom
 Was never given in vain;
 'Tis paid with sighs a plenty

And sold for endless rue.'
 And I am two-and-twenty,
 And oh, 'tis true, 'tis true.

Read the poem "When I was one-and-twenty..." by the Victorian poet A.E. Housman. How and why does the writer change his way of thinking from the beginning of the poem to the end of the poem? How do the tone and rhythm of the poem reflect his change in attitude?

In a detailed essay, analyze the meaning of "When I was one-and-twenty..." by A.E. Housman by specifically comparing how and why the writer's attitude changed from age 21 to age 22. Take the tone and rhythm of the poem into consideration and remember to cite lines from the poem to support your analysis.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Reading Literature Standard 3 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Character Comparison in *1984*

Winston Smith, the main character in George Orwell's *1984*, is very rebellious and unfit for the society in which he lives. When he meets Julia, he feels like he has finally met a person to whom he can relate. However, Julia and Winston are very different. In a multi-paragraph essay, compare and contrast Julia and Winston. Discuss the similarities and differences that exist between these two characters.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Character Development in *The Canterbury Tales*

"It seems a reasonable thing to say
 What their condition was, the full array
 Of each of them, as it appeared to me,
 According to profession and degree"

In the Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales*, Geoffrey Chaucer describes in detail many of the characters who will accompany the narrator on his pilgrimage. While Chaucer uses these character sketches to describe the physical features and occupations of each character, he also illustrates how the characters behave and what role they play in society.

Think about these fellow travelers and the descriptions provided by Chaucer. Choose two characters and write an essay in which you compare and contrast these two characters. What does Chaucer say about their appearance, behavior, and role in medieval society?

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Reading Literature Standard 3 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Choice Made by a Literary Character

Life is ultimately about choices. Consider the choices made by characters in books you have read. Select a choice made by a character whom you believe to have been especially important.

In a multi-paragraph essay, write about what you consider to be an important choice made by a literary character in a work of fiction. Explain what motivated that character to make the choice he/she did, how that choice affected that character, and how that choice affected others around him/her. Include references from the literary work to support your discussion.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Reading Literature Standard 4 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

“Civil Disobedience” by Thoreau

Thoreau's infamous ideas on "Civil Disobedience," written in 1849, have been monumental in the fight for change; from the 1940s fight against Danish resistance, the 1950s and McCarthyism, to the 1970s anti-war activists, Thoreau's words have helped lead the way to freedom. Why did Thoreau's message of freedom transcend his own time to be so influential to those throughout history?

In a multi-paragraph essay, describe the ways in which Thoreau's words are inspiring to us even today. How does he use diction, imagery, figurative language and emotional appeal to get his message across? Be sure to use specific details and examples to support your response.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Reading Literature Standard 3 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Closing Line in *The Great Gatsby*

At the end of *The Great Gatsby*, Nick Carraway reflects on the experiences he's had and what he has come to know of Jay Gatsby. The novel and Nick's reflection end with the line, "So we beat on, boats against the current, borne ceaselessly into the past."

Interpret this last line with respect to Gatsby's dreams, his achievements, and his failures. Explain the meaning of Nick's reflection and support your view with specific examples from the text. Do not summarize the plot. Instead, explain how the events of Gatsby's life are connected to Nick's final comment.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Reading Literature Standard 3 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Comparing Characters in “Everyday Use”

“Everyday Use” by Alice Walker is a short story exploring one particular culture's historical traditions. The two sisters, although raised in the same family, have very different ideas of how to best preserve their heritage. In a multi-paragraph essay, compare and contrast Maggie and Dee based on their motivations, personalities, and points of view with respect to preserving their heritage. Make sure to include specific details and examples from the story in your analysis.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Reading Literature Standard 4 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Comparing Sonnets

Both "Sonnet 43" by Elizabeth Barrett Browning and "Sonnet 116" by William Shakespeare delve into the passions of fervent love. After carefully reading both poems, write a multi-paragraph essay comparing and contrasting the two sonnets based upon poetic devices such as word choice, figurative language, and imagery. Use specific examples and details from the sonnets in your comparison.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Reading Literature Standard 4 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Comparison of Two Poems: Marlowe and Raleigh

Two poems follow. The second poem is a response to the first one. Read the two poems carefully. Then, in a well-organized essay, show how the speaker in the second poem both changes the shepherd's imagery and introduces new imagery to respond to his proposal. Develop your essay by making specific references to the texts.

The Passionate Shepherd to His Love Christopher Marlowe

Come live with me and be my love,
And we will all the pleasures prove
That hills and valleys, dales
and fields, Or woods, or steepy mountain yields.
And we will sit upon the rocks,
Seeing the shepherds feed their flocks,
By shallow rivers to whose falls
Melodious birds sing madrigals [songs].
And I will make thee beds of roses
And a thousand fragrant posies,
A cap of flowers, and a kirtle
[skirt] Embroidered all with leaves of myrtle;
A gown made of the finest wool
Which from our pretty lambs we pull;
Fair lined slippers for the cold,
With buckles of the purest gold;
A belt of straw and ivy buds,
With coral clasps and amber studs-
And if these pleasures may thee move
[persuade], Come live with me and be my love.
The shepherd swains shall dance and sing
For thy delight each May morning-
If these delights thy mind may move,
Then live with me and be my love.

The Nymph's [young woman's] Reply to the Shepherd
Sir Walter Raleigh

If all the world and love were young, And truth in every shepherd's tongue, These pretty pleasures
 might me move To live with thee and be thy love.
 Time drives the flocks from field to fold, When rivers rage and rocks grow cold; And Philomel [a
 nightingale] becometh dumb [mute]; The rest complain of cares to come.
 The flowers do fade, and wanton fields To wayward winter reckoning yields; A honey tongue, a heart
 of gall [bitterness] Is fancy's [amusement's] spring, but sorrow's fall.
 Thy gowns, thy shoes, thy bed of roses, Thy cap, thy kirtle, and thy posies, Soon break, soon wither,
 soon forgotten, In folly ripe, in reason rotten.
 Thy belt of straw and ivy buds, Thy coral clasps and amber studs, All these in me no means can move
 To come to thee and be thy love.
 But could [if only] youth last and love still breed, Had joys no date nor age no need, Then these
 delights my mind might move To live with thee and be thy love.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Reading Literature Standard 2 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Comparison of Two Poems: Wordsworth and Herrick

Read the poems about daffodils by William Wordsworth and Robert Herrick in the attached document. In a well-developed essay, compare and contrast the themes expressed in the two poems. Develop your essay by making specific references to the texts.

Daffodils

By William Wordsworth (1770-1850)

I WANDER'D lonely as a cloud
 That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
 When all at once I saw a crowd,
 A host, of golden daffodils;
 Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
 Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.
 Continuous as the stars that shine
 And twinkle on the Milky Way,
 They stretch'd in never-ending line
 Along the margin of a bay:
 Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
 Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.
 The waves beside them danced; but they
 Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
 A poet could not but be gay,
 In such a jocund company:
 I gazed - and gazed - but little thought
 What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie
 In vacant or in pensive mood,
 They flash upon that inward eye
 Which is the bliss of solitude;
 And then my heart with pleasure fills,
 And dances with the daffodils.

To Daffodils
By Robert Herrick (1591-1674)

FAIR daffodils, we weep to see
 You haste away so soon;
 As yet the early-rising sun
 Has not attain'd his noon.
 Stay, stay
 Until the hasting day
 Has run
 But to the evensong;
 And, having pray'd together, we
 Will go with you along.
 We have short time to stay, as you,
 We have as short a spring;
 As quick a growth to meet decay,
 As you, or anything.
 We die
 As your hours do, and dry
 Away
 Like to the summer's rain;
 Or as the pearls of morning's dew,
 Ne'er to be found again.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Curley's Wife in *Of Mice and Men*

Many readers of John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* change their feelings regarding Curley's wife as the story unfolds. What were your impressions of Curley's wife? Ultimately, was she an admirable character, victim, or a villain?

In a well-developed essay, analyze Steinbeck's portrayal of Curley's wife. Be sure to use specific details and examples from the novel to support your response.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Reading Literature Standard 3 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Definition of a Hero

Select a text and analyze themes and characters to answer the question, “What does it mean to be a hero?” How do characters’ traits, actions, and thoughts affect themselves and others? How or why are they heroic?

In a multi-paragraph essay, explore what it means to be a hero. Include examples and details from a literary work to support your discussion.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Reading Literature Standard 3 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Evaluating Good Literature

Consider a piece of literature you have read. How successful was the author in creating a good piece of literature?

After choosing a piece of literature to analyze, in a multi-paragraph essay, discuss the success of the author in creating a good piece of literature. Use details and examples from the story for support.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Reading Literature Standard 3 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Evolution of a Main Character

Consider a piece of literature you have read. How does the main character change from the beginning of the story to the end? What do you think causes this change?

After choosing a piece of literature, in a multi-paragraph essay, analyze the changes in the main character from the beginning to the end of the story. Use details and examples from the story for support.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Reading Literature Standard 3 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Fahrenheit 451

The character Montag changes throughout the course of Ray Bradbury's novel, *Fahrenheit 451*. In a well-developed essay, analyze how Montag changes in the novel. Who was Montag at the beginning of the novel? How did his beliefs and actions change by the end? Be sure to discuss the ways in which other main and subordinate characters influenced his transformation.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Reading Literature Standard 5 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Foreshadowing in *Macbeth*

When you think back to the opening scene or chapter of some works, you realize that early incidents or events became more and more important as you got further on in the work. The writer's technique here is foreshadowing, hinting or suggesting outcomes early in the work without giving the whole story away. The real importance of the first scene might not be revealed until much later in the work, perhaps not until the very end. *Macbeth* is a play which uses foreshadowing in such a way to suggest to the reader (or viewer) the conflicts yet to come.

Write an essay in which you analyze the opening scene of *Macbeth*. Explain the incidents or events and how they take on more meaning or significance later in the play. Be sure to tell at what point the true importance of the opening scene becomes clear to the reader (or viewer).

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Gothic Elements in "The Fall of the House of Usher"

First published in 1839, Edgar Allan Poe's short story "The Fall of the House of Usher," is a prime example of a piece of Gothic fiction. Gothic literature first appeared in England in the late 1700s by writers such as Horace Walpole and Anne Radcliffe, and is characterized by particular elements that are commonly still seen today in both literature and film. These elements include: haunted houses, castles, darkness, omens, foreshadowing, dreams, terror, death, madness, the supernatural, mental illness, ghosts, an aura of mystery, and romantic elements, such as obsessive or unrequited love. In order to make connections between the text and this historical period, think of the various elements of Gothic literature in Poe's story.

After reading Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher," write a well-developed essay in which you analyze and discuss the various elements of Gothic fiction found in the story. Specific elements to be discussed can be both physical and abstract. Remember to provide examples and quotes from the text in support of your analysis.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Reading Literature Standard 3 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Hasty Decisions in *Romeo and Juliet*

Romeo and Juliet has often been discussed as a story of hasty decisions. In a well-developed essay, provide support for this statement. Remember to include specific details and examples from the novel in your essay.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Heroism in *Things Fall Apart*

A hero is a character who is remembered and admired for accomplishing great things, while a tragic hero is one who attempts to do great things, but ultimately falls short and fails. In the novel *Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo defends his traditions and culture after the arrival of the European colonists. He is a hero in his own mind, but others view him more as a tragic figure, a fierce traditionalist who would stop at nothing to force others to conform to his beliefs.

What do you think? Is Okonkwo a hero or a tragic hero? Defend your interpretation with specific reasons and details about Okonkwo's actions and character.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

How Civilized are Rainsford and Zaroff?

In the short story “The Most Dangerous Game” by Richard Connell, General Zaroff and big-game hunter Sanger Rainsford both seem civilized, but are they?

In a multi-paragraph essay, support your position as to whether either man is civilized. Use quotes and details from the story to support your position and refute the opposing position.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

How Would I Handle a Dream Deferred?

A Dream Deferred

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up
like a raisin in the sun?
or fester like a sore—
And then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over—
like a sugary sweet?
Maybe it just sags
like a heavy load.

Or does it explode?

Langston Hughes

In “A Dream Deferred,” Langston Hughes raises the question of how one should handle putting off a goal or dream. What would happen if you had to defer a dream or goal in order to help someone close to you? Would you eventually revisit your dream or would you abandon it after some time?

In a well-developed essay, discuss a time when you had to defer a personal goal or dream so that you could help someone close to you. How did your handling of that deferred dream or goal relate to this poem?

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Reading Literature Standard 4 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

“I’m Nobody! Who Are You?”

Read the poem “I’m Nobody! Who Are You?” by the American poet Emily Dickinson.

Write an essay in which you explain what Emily Dickinson thinks it means to be a "nobody" versus being a "somebody" and discuss how you think this poem applies to the life of today's teenager.

I'm Nobody! Who are you?
 Are you- Nobody -too?
 Then there's a pair of us!
 Don't tell! They'll banish us -you know!
 How dreary -to be Somebody!
 How public -like a Frog -
 To tell one's name - the livelong June -
 To an admiring bog.

Emily Dickinson, 288. “I’m Nobody! Who are you?” *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson*, edited by Thomas H. Johnson. Copyright 1929.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Is the American Dream Worth Pursuing?

During the period from the early 1900s to the present, the American Dream has undergone many transformations. From the time of the early immigrants, through the Harlem Renaissance, and during the Modernistic Period, authors have recounted the trials and tribulations of those pursuing the American Dream.

After reflecting on the authors and selections you have read from American Literature, determine whether you believe the American Dream is worth pursuing. In a well-developed essay, articulate your position and support your argument with references to works of American Literature.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Reading Literature Standard 4 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Reading Literature Standard 5 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

King's Use of Stylistic Devices to Appeal to His Audience

Martin Luther King Jr. is famous for his use of stylistic devices in his oratory. In his speeches, he often used different stylistic devices to appeal to different kinds of audiences. King also used the unique circumstances surrounding a historical event to determine the most effective stylistic devices to use (e.g., metaphors, imagery, and alliteration).

In a multi-paragraph essay, explain how specific historical events influenced King's choice of stylistic devices and affected his intended audience. Be sure to support your explanation by including key references to King's writing.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Lessons Learned in *Lord of the Flies*

At the end of *Lord of the Flies*, Ralph is on the beach, crying in front of his rescuers as he thinks about the events he has witnessed and participated in on the island. Suppose he were to return home and tell a counselor what he had seen, what he had done, and what he had learned from these experiences.

Write what Ralph might say to a counselor about what he had learned about other people and about himself from what he saw and what he did on the island. Discuss at least three new insights or understandings Ralph has gained, and connect each insight to the event or events that led up to it. At least one of these insights must be about himself. Give specific examples from the text. Do not summarize the plot. Instead, tell enough about each event to show how seeing or participating in the event led to the insight.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Lessons Learned in "The Necklace"

In the story "The Necklace" by Guy de Maupassant many characters make mistakes and jump to faulty conclusions. However, the situations they go through give us insights into our own lives and experiences. After carefully reading "The Necklace," write a multi-paragraph essay discussing one important lesson that you learned as a result of reading this story. Use details and examples from the text to support your interpretation.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Reading Literature Standard 7 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Literature and Film Comparison

Think about a novel or play you have read that was also developed into a movie.

Write a multi-paragraph essay comparing and contrasting the book and the movie. Be sure to consider differences and similarities in characters, setting, and plot. Include specific examples and details from the text and the film to support your response.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Mercy or Murder

At the end of John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*, George shoots Lennie in the back of the head. George feels he has no alternative, and that if he doesn't kill Lennie, Carlson or Curley might. George also knows that if they don't find him and kill him, Lennie will definitely go to jail for killing Curley's wife. Do you think that George was justified in murdering Lennie?

In a well-developed essay, defend your position on whether or not George should have killed Lennie. Provide evidence from the text to support your reasoning.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Reading Literature Standard 4 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Reading Literature Standard 5 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Mood in Edgar Allan Poe Stories and Poems

Edgar Allan Poe is a master at creating a distinguishing mood in his stories and poems. In "The Raven" and such stories as "The Cask of Amontillado," "The Masque of the Red Death," "The Pit and the Pendulum," and "The Tell-Tale Heart," Poe creates a very distinctive and effective atmosphere. Select one of Edgar Allan Poe's short stories or poems and analyze how the author was able to create a particular mood in his stories and what effect it has on the reader. Remember to include the various techniques Poe used such as setting, imagery, tone, and suspense.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Narrator in "The Scarlet Ibis"

In "The Scarlet Ibis," a short story by James Hurst, the narrator and his brother, Doodle, seem to have a good relationship. However, by the end of the story, the reader is left wondering whether this is really a "good" relationship. Can Brother be described as a loving brother?

In a detailed essay, identify the traits of a "good" brother and characterize Brother as either "good" or "bad." Use quotes and details from the story to support your characterization and to refute the opposing position.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Reading Literature Standard 4 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Nature in Robert Frost's Poetry

Robert Frost is arguably America's most famous poet, having won four Pulitzer Prizes and a Congressional Medal. In his poems, he often uses nature to represent the realities of life and the human experience. Select one of his poems and, in a multi-paragraph essay, analyze the symbolic meaning of nature in this poem. Make sure to include details and examples from the text to support your interpretation.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Patterns in Nature and Literature

Robert Frost and Wilson Bentley look closely at nature's patterns in their works. Read Frost's "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" and Bentley's "Photographing Snowflakes" to experience their views on the natural world.

After reading Frost's "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" and Bentley's "Photographing Snowflakes," write a detailed essay that explains how patterns are essential to understanding nature and literature. Refer to the two works to support your explanation.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Personal Response to Literature

Personal response to a book can include reactions to events, characters, symbols, themes, questions about situations, or some aspect which interests you or has meaning to you. A personal response is not a plot summary, character sketch, or explanation of a literary element. Can you personally relate to any events in a book you have recently read? Does an event or character stand out as noteworthy?

In a letter to your teacher, write a personal response to a book you have recently read. Quote passages from the work to support your response.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Playing the Devil's Advocate

For most novels, both favorable and unfavorable reviews can be written, depending on the reviewer's criteria. Choose a novel you have recently read, and critique it as both a "great" and a "lousy" book. Define "great" and "lousy," and include evidence from the text to support your arguments.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Prejudice in *To Kill a Mockingbird*

In *To Kill a Mockingbird*, there are occurrences of different kinds of prejudice. In a well-developed essay, provide evidence to support this statement. Remember to include specific details and examples from the novel in your essay.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Reading Literature Standard 4 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

“Remember” by Joy Harjo

Read the poem “Remember” by Joy Harjo.

After reading the poem, write a multi-paragraph essay in which you analyze the meaning of the poem. In your essay, use examples from the poem to support your interpretation. Be sure to explain how literary devices are used in the poem to add to its meaning. Such devices may include symbolism, imagery, simile, metaphor, repetition, etc.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Reputation in Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*

In Arthur Miller's famous play *The Crucible*, innocent people are falsely accused of witchcraft and are killed as a result. The importance of one's reputation is one of the themes presented in the play, as the townspeople are held to very strict moral values and must uphold their good name in society. Think about how this theme applies to one or more of the characters. How do these characters feel about their reputation being tarnished? What are they willing to do to keep their good name?

In a detailed essay, choose one or more characters and discuss how this theme of reputation applies to them. Provide examples and quotations from the play to support your response.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Responding to Frederick Douglass' Quotation

Frederick Douglass once said, "If there is no struggle there is no progress." Based on what you have learned about Douglass, write a multi-paragraph essay explaining what you think he meant by this statement. Make sure to include details and examples to support your interpretation.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Reading Literature Standard 2 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Shakespeare's View of Love

Shakespeare's sonnets have a unique view of love that extends beyond conventional thoughts to consider the subject from a variety of perspectives. Select one of Shakespeare's sonnets and give your interpretation of the author's view of love. Support your answer using details and examples from the text.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Significance of the Title of *Night*

Elie Wiesel wrote a famous memoir, titled *Night*, that described his personal experience of what it was like to be in a concentration camp during World War II. Why do you think he chose this title for his memoir?

Write an essay in which you discuss why you think Elie Wiesel selected this title and how it helps to communicate his message.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Stopping the Salem Witch Trials

After carefully reading *The Crucible* by Arthur Miller, imagine you live at the time of the Salem Witch Trials. You have seen many of your friends and loved ones executed due to false accusations. Write a letter to Danforth persuading him to put an end to this situation. Make sure to include details and examples from the text to support your argument.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Reading Literature Standard 3 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Symbolism in *Animal Farm*

In the book *Animal Farm*, George Orwell uses animals to symbolically represent humans and our creations of government and society. Orwell allegorically uses animals and their social groups to criticize Joseph Stalin's rise to power, the overall nature of mankind, and the many difficulties that we must all face. After reading the story, what animal do you believe best symbolizes either virtuous or negative human behavior?

In a detailed essay, identify the animal you have chosen and what behavior this animal symbolizes. Be sure to include specific examples and details from the novel to support your response.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Reading Literature Standard 3 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Symbolism in *Speak*

Speak, by Laurie Halse Anderson, tells the story of Melinda Sordino and the personal challenges she faces after a traumatic incident during the summer before her freshman year of high school. Melinda's mouth, the janitor's closet, and trees are all symbols used throughout the text that exemplify Melinda's current state of mind.

In a detailed essay, explain how one of these symbols portrays Melinda's growth. Include details and examples to support your explanation.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12
Reading Literature Standard 3 – Grades 9-10, 11-12
Symbolism in *The Scarlet Letter*

If one closely analyzes the novel *The Scarlet Letter*, there are a myriad of symbols to uncover. Even the letter "A" has many different symbolic interpretations. In a multi-paragraph essay, examine all of the different meanings the letter "A" has in this novel. Make sure to include examples and details from the text to support your answer.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12
The American Dream in *A Raisin in the Sun*

Many people believe that, in pursuing their vision of the American Dream, the Younger Family made a mistake by not taking Linder's money. What do you think?

Write an essay in which you take a position on whether not taking Linder's money or letting Linder buy back the house is the better decision. Be sure to discuss your definition of the American Dream and explain how your position would help the Younger family attain it.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12
Reading Literature Standard 3 – Grades 9-10, 11-12
“The Hiking Trip”

In the story “The Hiking Trip,” the reader learns about the main character, Jeff. Jeff's personality and emotions are revealed through the actions and dialogue presented in the story.

Write an essay in which you describe the personality and emotions of Jeff, the main character. How do his personal characteristics add to the events in the story? How does the author reveal this information about Jeff in the story? Use details and examples from the story to support your ideas.

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The following story describes a young boy's heroic actions to help his injured brother. Read the story and complete Writing Task 1.

The Hiking Trip

"I never wanted to come on this stupid old hiking trip anyway!" His voice echoed, shrill and panicked, across the narrow canyon. His father stopped, chest heaving with the effort of the climb, and turned to look at the boy.

"This is hard on you, son, I know. But you've got to come through with courage and a level head."

"But I'm scared! I don't even want to have courage!" he retorted. He jerked his head the other way and wiped his eyes across his arm.

"If not courage, fine," his father replied sternly. "Then have enough love for your brother to think this through!" He pulled a bandana from his back pocket and tied it around his neck. Then he gently placed his hand on the boy's shoulder and continued, more softly this time. "Now, I don't know if I can make it without stopping every so often. And we just don't have the time to stop. You're young, but you're strong and fast. Do you remember the way back from here to the road, if you had to go alone?"

Jeff flashed back to the agonizing scene of his seventeen-year-old brother at their campsite that morning. He'd been bitten by a snake yesterday during a rough hike through very rocky terrain. By the time they returned to their tents, he was limping badly. Then this morning he couldn't put on his boots, and the pain seemed to be getting worse. He needed medical attention right away, so leaving him there was their only choice.

"Jeffrey? Jeffrey, could you do it? Could you make it to the road without me if you had to?"

Jeff blinked and looked past his father's eyes to the end of the canyon, several miles away. He nodded slowly as the path and the plan began to take hold in his mind. "What was the name of that little town we stopped in to get matches, Dad?"

His father smiled and replied, "Flint. After we left Flint, we parked at the side of the road a few miles out of town. When you see which way our car is facing, you'll know that the town is back the other direction."

Jeff thought about this and then nodded. They both drank water and then continued scrambling over the rocks.

Nothing was as pretty as it had seemed when they first hiked this way to their campsite. Before, the boulders and rocks had been an interesting challenge. Now, they were obstacles that threatened their footing and their velocity. Overhanging limbs had earlier been natural curiosities in the cliffs. But now they were nature's weapons, slapping and scratching the boy and the man who crashed by and pushed through as quickly as they could.

Stone by stone, they made their way up the canyon. Jeff's father grew smaller and smaller in the distance. "He must be stopping a lot," Jeff thought. He waved to him from a bend in the canyon wall. His father waved back. Jeff turned and made the final ascent up an easier slope toward the road and spotted his father's car. He lurched toward it, half stumbling, and leaned on the hood, breathless.

"Can't stop," he thought. "Mark's in big trouble. Gotta keep going." The fast, loud thudding in his ears was deafening, and as he pulled himself upright, he was surprised as a car sped by, heading toward Flint. "Hey, mister!" he shouted, waving both arms. He began to walk, faster and faster until he was jogging. Then he quickly crossed the highway and broke into a full-speed run, holding his left arm straight out, his thumb up.

His chest was burning with every breath when he suddenly heard several loud honks from behind. He turned as the brakes squealed and saw "Bob's Towing and Repair, Flint" right behind him. "Jump in, boy! What's up?" Jeff explained between gasps as the truck picked up speed. The driver reached for his two-way radio as soon as he heard about Mark. "Better get the helicopter in there," he seemed to be shouting into his hand. But Jeff wasn't sure about that because everything got fuzzy and then went black and quiet.

Hours later, Jeff opened his eyes to find strange surroundings and his father on a chair nearby.

"You're a hero, son," his father said with a smile. "You saved Mark."

"What happened?" Jeff asked through a wide yawn. "Where are we?"

"This is a motel room in Flint. You made it into town and sent the helicopter into the canyon after Mark. I can't tell you how happy I was when I saw it overhead. I'm so proud of you!"

Jeff sat up suddenly. "Where's Mark? Is he OK?"

"They airlifted him out and got him to the hospital. His leg's still in bad shape, but he's going to be just fine in a couple of days. Thanks to you, son."

Jeff's worried face relaxed as his father spoke. "How about you, Dad? How did you get out?"

"Well, I finally hiked myself out of that canyon and to the road. I won't be going back there any time soon. That's for sure. Anyway, I couldn't see the car, and as I headed for Flint I got lucky and was able to hitch a ride from a fellow named Bob in a tow truck."

Jeff laughed out loud. "I guess Bob makes a good living going up and down that road. I hope you gave him a good tip, Dad!"

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Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

The Merits of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

The novel *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* has become quite controversial over time. Some parents and teachers find the demeaning language and situations in the novel disturbing. Others, however, believe the novel is a powerful commentary about society at the time it was written. Due to this controversy, your local school board has decided to review the novel to decide whether it ought to remain in the curriculum.

Do you think that the novel should be removed from the curriculum? Write a persuasive essay in which you examine the literary value of the novel and take a stand on this controversial issue. Be sure to support your position with well-reasoned arguments and meaningful references to the text.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12
"The Most Dangerous Game" by Richard Connell

At the beginning of the "The Most Dangerous Game," Rainsford states, "The world is made up of two classes—the hunters and the huntees."

After carefully reading the story, write a multi-paragraph essay examining whether you agree or disagree with this statement. Include examples and details from the text and your own experiences to support your answer.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12
The Odyssey, An Epic

The Odyssey by Homer is a very famous epic and has been shared for thousands of years. After carefully reading *The Odyssey*, write a multi-paragraph essay describing the characteristics of an epic and what qualities of *The Odyssey* specifically qualify it as an epic. Use details and examples from the text to support your analysis.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12
Reading Literature Standard 3 – Grades 9-10, 11-12
The Speeches in *Julius Caesar*

After the death of Julius Caesar, both Brutus and Mark Antony spoke to the public. In a well-developed essay, compare and contrast the two speeches, explaining the outcome of the speeches and relating them to the eventual outcome of the entire play. Use quotes from the speeches to support your statements.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12
Reading Literature Standard 4 – Grades 9-10, 11-12
"The Story of an Eyewitness" by Jack London

Read the account of the San Francisco Earthquake by Jack London.

In a well-developed essay, analyze Jack London's use of vivid language in his account of the San Francisco Earthquake.

THE STORY OF AN EYEWITNESS
By Jack London, *Collier's* special Correspondent
(First published in *Collier's*, May 5, 1906)

Upon receipt of the first news of the earthquake, Collier's telegraphed to Mr. Jack London—who lives only forty miles from San Francisco—requesting him to go to the scene of the disaster and write the

story of what he saw. Mr. London started at once, and he sent the following dramatic description of the tragic events he witnessed in the burning city.

The earthquake shook down in San Francisco hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of walls and chimneys. But the conflagration that followed burned up hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of property. There is no estimating within hundreds of millions the actual damage wrought. Not in history has a modern imperial city been so completely destroyed. San Francisco is gone. Nothing remains of it but memories and a fringe of dwelling-houses on its outskirts. Its industrial section is wiped out. Its business section is wiped out. Its social and residential section is wiped out. The factories and warehouses, the great stores and newspaper buildings, the hotels and the palaces of the nabobs, are all gone. Remains only the fringe of dwelling houses on the outskirts of what was once San Francisco.

Within an hour after the earthquake shock the smoke of San Francisco's burning was a lurid tower visible a hundred miles away. And for three days and nights this lurid tower swayed in the sky, reddening the sun, darkening the day, and filling the land with smoke.

On Wednesday morning at a quarter past five came the earthquake. A minute later the flames were leaping upward. In a dozen different quarters south of Market Street, in the working-class ghetto, and in the factories, fires started. There was no opposing the flames. There was no organization, no communication. All the cunning adjustments of a twentieth century city had been smashed by the earthquake. The streets were humped into ridges and depressions, and piled with the debris of fallen walls. The steel rails were twisted into perpendicular and horizontal angles. The telephone and telegraph systems were disrupted. And the great water-mains had burst. All the shrewd contrivances and safeguards of man had been thrown out of gear by thirty seconds' twitching of the earth-crust.

The Fire Made its Own Draft

By Wednesday afternoon, inside of twelve hours, half the heart of the city was gone. At that time I watched the vast conflagration from out on the bay. It was dead calm. Not a flicker of wind stirred. Yet from every side wind was pouring in upon the city. East, west, north, and south, strong winds were blowing upon the doomed city. The heated air rising made an enormous suck. Thus did the fire of itself build its own colossal chimney through the atmosphere. Day and night this dead calm continued, and yet, near to the flames, the wind was often half a gale, so mighty was the suck.

Wednesday night saw the destruction of the very heart of the city. Dynamite was lavishly used, and many of San Francisco proudest structures were crumbled by man himself into ruins, but there was no withstanding the onrush of the flames. Time and again successful stands were made by the fire-fighters, and every time the flames flanked around on either side or came up from the rear, and turned to defeat the hard-won victory.

An enumeration of the buildings destroyed would be a directory of San Francisco. An enumeration of the buildings undestroyed would be a line and several addresses. An enumeration of the deeds of heroism would stock a library and bankrupt the Carnegie medal fund. An enumeration of the dead-will never be made. All vestiges of them were destroyed by the flames. The number of the victims of the earthquake will never be known. South of Market Street, where the loss of life was particularly heavy, was the first to catch fire.

Remarkable as it may seem, Wednesday night while the whole city crashed and roared into ruin, was a quiet night. There were no crowds. There was no shouting and yelling. There was no hysteria, no disorder. I passed Wednesday night in the path of the advancing flames, and in all those terrible hours I saw not one woman who wept, not one man who was excited, not one person who was in the slightest degree panic stricken.

A Caravan of Trunks

All night these tens of thousands fled before the flames. Many of them, the poor people from the labor ghetto, had fled all day as well. They had left their homes burdened with possessions. Now and again they lightened up, flinging out upon the street clothing and treasures they had dragged for miles.

They held on longest to their trunks, and over these trunks many a strong man broke his heart that night. The hills of San Francisco are steep, and up these hills, mile after mile, were the trunks dragged. Everywhere were trunks with across them lying their exhausted owners, men and women. Before the march of the flames were flung picket lines of soldiers. And a block at a time, as the flames advanced, these pickets retreated. One of their tasks was to keep the trunk-pullers moving. The exhausted creatures, stirred on by the menace of bayonets, would arise and struggle up the steep pavements, pausing from weakness every five or ten feet.

Often, after surmounting a heart-breaking hill, they would find another wall of flame advancing upon them at right angles and be compelled to change anew the line of their retreat. In the end, completely played out, after toiling for a dozen hours like giants, thousands of them were compelled to abandon their trunks. Here the shopkeepers and soft members of the middle class were at a disadvantage. But the working-men dug holes in vacant lots and backyards and buried their trunks.

The Doomed City

At nine o'clock Wednesday evening I walked down through the very heart of the city. I walked through miles and miles of magnificent buildings and towering skyscrapers. Here was no fire. All was in perfect order. The police patrolled the streets. Every building had its watchman at the door. And yet it was doomed, all of it. There was no water. The dynamite was giving out. And at right angles two different conflagrations were sweeping down upon it.

At one o'clock in the morning I walked down through the same section. Everything still stood intact. There was no fire. And yet there was a change. A rain of ashes was falling. The watchmen at the doors were gone. The police had been withdrawn. There were no firemen, no fire-engines, no men fighting with dynamite. The district had been absolutely abandoned. I stood at the corner of Kearney and Market, in the very innermost heart of San Francisco. Kearny Street was deserted. Half a dozen blocks away it was burning on both sides. The street was a wall of flame. And against this wall of flame, silhouetted sharply, were two United States cavalymen sitting their horses, calmly watching. That was all. Not another person was in sight. In the intact heart of the city two troopers sat their horses and watched.

Thursday Morning

San Francisco, at the present time, is like the crater of a volcano, around which are camped tens of thousands of refugees. At the Presidio alone are at least twenty thousand. All the surrounding cities and towns are jammed with the homeless ones, where they are being cared for by the relief committees. The refugees were carried free by the railroads to any point they wished to go, and it is estimated that over one hundred thousand people have left the peninsula on which San Francisco stood. The Government has the situation in hand, and, thanks to the immediate relief given by the whole United States, there is not the slightest possibility of a famine. The bankers and business men have already set about making preparations to rebuild San Francisco.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

The Things S/he Carries...

In his novel, *The Things They Carried*, Tim O'Brien reveals character through what the soldiers carried with them. Some of what they carried was tangible, such as food and water, weapons, or mementos, while some of what they carried was intangible, such as fear, prejudice, or embarrassment.

Think about a high school student, either real or imaginary. In a well-organized essay, describe what this student carries with him or herself and what these "things" reveal about the student's character, personality, and values. Be sure to use details to make your character analysis more vivid to the readers.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Reading Literature Standard 2 – Grades 9-10

The Title in *Of Mice and Men*

Titles of novels and plays are often based on famous lines from earlier works. John Steinbeck, author of *Of Mice and Men*, took several of his titles from such famous lines. *The Winter of Our Discontent* comes from a line in a play by Shakespeare. The title *The Grapes of Wrath*, perhaps his most famous book, comes from a line in "The Battle Hymn of the Republic." The title of *Of Mice and Men* also comes from another work. It is part of a line in a poem called "To A Mouse" by the Scottish poet Robert Burns. The speaker in the poem is a farmer who has just accidentally destroyed the nest of a mouse by plowing up his field.

Here is the complete line, addressed to the mouse (with a little translation):

"The best-laid [most careful] schemes [plans] o' mice an' men
Gang aft agley [often go wrong],
An' lea'e [leave] us nought [nothing] but grief an' pain
For promised joy!"

Show how this title is appropriate for the characters and events of the novel. Make specific references to the novel to support your ideas. Do not summarize the plot. Instead, explain how this title, considering its source, is appropriate for the characters and events of the novel.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Reading Literature Standard 3 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

The Use of Metaphor in *To Kill a Mockingbird*

A dominant motif, or recurring thematic idea, in Harper Lee's novel, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, is the symbolic importance of the mockingbird. In the story, Atticus tells his children, "...it is a sin to kill a mockingbird."

In a well-developed essay, explain how Atticus Finch, Tom Robinson, and Boo Radley are metaphorically portrayed as mockingbirds. Give specific details and quotes to support these characterizations.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Reading Literature Standard 2 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Theme in Literature

A theme is the main message a reader can learn about life or human nature from a literary piece. From a story you have read in class, identify a theme that the reader may learn from the story. In a well-organized essay, describe this theme. Use textual examples from the story to support your ideas and explain how they support the theme.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Tragic Hero in *Oedipus*

In the Greek tragedy *Oedipus*, an admired king suffers a harsh downfall after learning the truth about his birth and his parents. Based on the events and details in the text, does Oedipus possess the qualities of a tragic hero?

In a detailed essay, explain the ways in which Oedipus does or does not fit the Aristotelian definition of a tragic hero.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Reading Literature Standard 2 – Grades 9-10

Transcendentalism Themes

Read the poem "My Symphony" by William Ellery Channing, the essay "The Young American" by Ralph Waldo Emerson, and view a Transcendentalism-themed comic (e.g., a Calvin and Hobbes or Peanuts comic strip). What Transcendentalist theme does each demonstrate, and how is that theme evident in the work?

After reading "My Symphony" by William Ellery Channing, "The Young American" by Ralph Waldo Emerson, and viewing a Transcendentalism-themed comic, write a multi-paragraph essay identifying

the Transcendentalist theme within each (self-reliance, optimism, non-conformity, patriotism, and/or the importance of nature). Be sure to use evidence from the materials to illustrate the theme presented.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Reading Literature Standard 4 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Views on Colonization of North America

Read the articles “Life and Letters of John Winthrop,” by R. C. Winthrop and “A Rationale for New World Colonization,” by Richard Hakluyt. How do the authors use figurative language to express their views as to why America should be colonized? After reading the two texts, write an essay discussing the authors’ use of figurative language to encourage colonization in North America. Support your discussion with evidence from the text(s). As part of your discussion, explain the conclusions you can draw from Winthrop’s and Hakluyt’s language about their views on colonization.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Walt Whitman: American Poet and Civil War Nurse

After watching a biographical video on Walt Whitman, and reading his poem “The Artilleryman’s Vision” and his February 2, 1864 letter to his mother, write a literary analysis that compares and contrasts Whitman’s depictions of Civil War experiences. Support your analysis with facts and details from the text.

Passage:

“The Artilleryman’s Vision” by Walt Whitman

While my wife at my side lies slumbering, and the wars are over long,
 And my head on the pillow rests at home, and the vacant midnight passes,
 And through the stillness, through the dark, I hear, just hear, the breath of my infant,
 There in the room, as I wake from sleep, this vision presses upon me;
 The engagement opens there and then, in fantasy unreal;
 The skirmishers begin, they crawl cautiously ahead, I hear the irregular snap! snap!
 I hear the sounds of the different missiles, the short t-h-t! t-h-t! of the rifle balls;
 I see the shells exploding, leaving small white clouds, I hear the great shells shrieking as they pass,
 The grape, like the hum and whirr of wind through the trees,
 (quick, tumultuous, now the contest rages!)
 All the scenes at the batteries rise in detail before me again;
 The crashing and smoking, the pride of the men in their pieces;
 The chief-gunner ranges and sights his piece, and selects a fuse of the right time;
 After firing, I see him lean aside, and look eagerly off to note the effect;
 Elsewhere I hear the cry of a regiment charging,
 (the young colonel leads himself this time, with brandish’d sword;)
 I see the gaps cut by the enemy’s volleys, (quickly fill’d up, no delay;)
 I breathe the suffocating smoke—then the flat clouds hover low, concealing all;
 Now a strange lull comes for a few seconds, not a shot fired on either side;

Then resumed, the chaos louder than ever, with eager calls, and orders of officers;
 While from some distant part of the field the wind wafts
 to my ears a shout of applause, (some special success;)

And ever the sound of the cannon, far or near, (rousing, even in dreams,
 a devilish exultation, and all the old mad joy, in the depths of my soul;)

And ever the hastening of infantry shifting positions,
 batteries, cavalry, moving hither and thither;

(The falling, dying, I heed not—the wounded, dripping and red,
 I heed not—some to the rear are hobbling;)

Grime, heat, rush, aid-de-camps galloping by, or on a full run;

With the patter of small arms, the warning s-s-t of the rifles, (these in my vision I hear or see,)

And bombs bursting in air, and at night the vari-color'd rockets.

Passage:

Letter from Walt Whitman to his mother, Louisa Van Velsor Whitman, 2 February 1864

Washington
 Feb 2, 1864

Dearest Mother,

I am writing this by the side of the young man you asked about, Lewis Brown, in Armory Square hospital—He is now getting along very well indeed—The amputation is healing up good, & he does not suffer anything like as much as he did. I see him every day. We have had real hot weather here, & for the last three days wet & rainy—it is more like June than February—
I am well as usual—there has been several hundred sick soldiers brought in here yesterday—

I have been around among them today all day—it is enough to make one heart-sick, the old times over again—they are many of them mere wrecks, though young men—(sickness is worse in some respects than wounds)—one boy about 16, from Portland, Maine, only came from home a month ago, a recruit, he is here now, very sick & downhearted, poor child, he is a real country boy, I think has consumption—he was only a week with his [regiment]—I sat with him a long time—I saw [it] did him great good—I have been feeding some their dinners—it makes me feel quite proud, I find so frequently I can do with the men what no one else at all can, getting them to eat, (some that will not touch their food otherwise, nor for anybody else)—it is sometimes quite affecting I can tell you—I found such a case to-day, a soldier with throat disease, very bad—I fed him quite a dinner—the men, his comrades around, just stared in wonder, & one of them told me afterwards that he (the sick man) had not eat so much at a meal, in three months—Mother, I shall have my hands pretty full now for a while—write all about things home—

Walt

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Whitman & Hughes: "America" Poems

In the poems "I Hear America Singing" written by Walt Whitman and "I, Too" written by Langston Hughes, the speakers express their own perceptions of America.

Read carefully Walt Whitman's poem "I Hear America Singing" and Langston Hughes' poem "I, Too." What attitudes do the speakers express towards America? Write an essay in which you compare and contrast the two speakers' attitudes towards America and the techniques each poet uses to create these attitudes.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Who is the Real Monster in *Frankenstein*?

The story of *Frankenstein* traces Victor Frankenstein's discovery of the secret of life and successful attempt to animate a monster. While the creature displays remarkably human qualities throughout the novel, Victor Frankenstein himself shows some tendencies that can be described as distinctly inhumane. By the end of the novel, the reader is left wondering, who is the real monster in the book?

Write an essay in which you answer this question: "Who is the real monster in *Frankenstein*?" Why do you feel this way? Support your answer with evidence from the text.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Who is to Blame in *Romeo and Juliet*

In William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, people often wonder how things could have gone so wrong for the "two star-crossed lovers." As the story unfolds, it is evident that many characters play a vital role in the events that ultimately lead to the tragic deaths of Romeo and Juliet.

In a well-developed essay, explain which character(s) is (are) ultimately to blame for the deaths of Romeo and Juliet.

Pilot Prompts

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

A Child Called "It": Father's Role and Perspective (pilot)

A Child Called "It", by Dave Pelzer, is Pelzer's autobiographical depiction of the years of abuse he endured by his alcoholic mother. The abuse continued for many years until Pelzer was finally saved by teachers at his school at the age of 12 on March 5, 1973.

Where was Pelzer's father during this abuse? What do you think were the father's thoughts and feelings towards his son's abuse? Was there anything he could do to stop it? Finally, what made Pelzer leave the house when he was 12?

In a detailed essay, discuss the role of Dave Pelzer's father in the autobiography, as well as his perspective toward the situation. Provide examples from the text to support your response.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

A Letter from Holden in *The Catcher in the Rye* (pilot)

J.D. Salinger's classic novel, *The Catcher in the Rye*, explains the world from the point of view of a troubled teenage boy named Holden Caulfield. Imagine you are Holden and are being asked to write a letter to another character in the novel. How does he feel about life? What kinds of things would he say?

Write a letter as Holden Caulfield to another character in the novel. Remember to mention particular events in the novel to show your understanding of his character.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Reading Literature Standard 2 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

A Tale of Two Cities: The Best and Worst of Times (pilot)

A Tale of Two Cities begins with a description of that period as a collection of superlative opposites including "the best of times" and "the worst of times."

In a detailed essay, explain the ways in which *A Tale of Two Cities* represents "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." Include details and examples to support your explanation.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12
Reading Literature Standard 2 – Grades 9-10, 11-12
Reading Literature Standard 9 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

A Universal Theme in Two Works (pilot)

After reading the short story, *Too Soon a Woman*, and the play excerpt, *A Defenseless Creature*, identify a universal theme presented in the two works. How do the different viewpoints in each story contribute to the theme?

In a well-developed essay, identify and compare the universal theme within the stories, using details and references from the text to support your explanation.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Acceptance of Diversity in the Harry Potter Books (pilot)

In everyday life, most of us are treated based on our social status, gender, or race. This is also true for the characters in the Harry Potter series. Giants and house elves are just two examples of characters who suffer from this kind of discrimination.

In a well-developed essay, discuss prejudice against characters in the Harry Potter series. Include facts and details from the book(s) to support your discussion.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Reading Literature Standard 4 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

An Author’s Way with Words (pilot)

Reading a Shakespearean play or other work often exposes the reader to a new way of looking at the English language. In a well-developed essay, analyze an author’s use of language, specifically determining the explicit and implicit meanings of various words and phrases, as well as the impact of these word choices on meaning and tone. Be sure to provide examples and textual evidence to support your analysis.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Reading Literature Standard 4 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Analysis of Owen’s “Dulce et Decorum Est” (pilot)

In the poem “Dulce et Decorum Est,” Wilfred Owen graphically describes a soldier’s death from gas poisoning. His description employs literary devices, word choice, and sensory images to support his theme that it is not always sweet and right to die for one’s country.

In a multi-paragraph essay, discuss Owen’s use of literary devices, word choice, and sensory images to convey his theme. Include references to the poem to support your discussion.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Reading Literature Standard 2 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Applying Socrates’s Quote to *Great Expectations* (pilot)

“One who is injured ought not to return the injury, for on no account can it be right to do an injustice; and it is not right to return an injury or to do evil to any man, however much we have suffered from him.” —Socrates

Some of the main characters in Charles Dickens’s *Great Expectations* seem to have followed the advice in the Socrates quote above, while others did not. Each of their decisions to injure or not led directly to consequences in their lives.

In a well-developed essay, discuss how the quote from Socrates relates to the actions and later consequences in the lives of Pip, Joe, Mrs. Havisham, Mrs. Joe, Molly, and Magwitch. Use quotes and details from the book to support your discussion.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Are Epic Heroes Brave, Smart, or Lucky? (pilot)

Epic heroes like Odysseus, Perseus, Hercules, and Jason are characterized as strong, smart, and brave. Each has completed a daunting mission or journey while experiencing a significant growth of self along the way. Are all epic heroes strong, smart, and brave, or is some of their success due to luck?

Choose an epic hero and write a multi-paragraph essay using details from that hero’s life to prove that he is brave, smart, or lucky.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Author Reflects the Times (pilot)

The Discovery Channel’s *Great Books* video series offers insights on what inspired authors to write stories that reflected world events or societal attitudes in a particular era. Questions that might be evoked or answered include: What world events impacted the author’s writings? What makes the literary work thought-provoking, intriguing, or even controversial? What do you suppose went through the author’s mind as he/she was writing?

After choosing an author or viewing a video from the *Great Books* series, write a well-developed essay discussing the parallels that can be drawn from the author’s literary work and historical/cultural experiences or societal attitudes.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Beowulf Compared to Modern-Day Hero (pilot)

Although some people consider Beowulf’s actions and attitudes heroic, others disagree, calling Beowulf anything but a hero. How does the ancient character of Beowulf compare to a modern-day hero or superhero? How do the definitions of a hero differ for Beowulf and modern-day heroes?

Select a modern-day hero like Superman, Malcolm X, Aaron Rodgers, or someone you know. In a detailed essay, compare and contrast Beowulf to the modern-day hero you have selected. Include details and examples from Beowulf and the story of the modern-day hero you have chosen to support your assertions.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

“Best Laid Plans” in *Great Expectations* (pilot)

Robert Burns’s quote, “the best laid plans of mice and men often go astray,” can be applied to characters in Charles Dickens’s *Great Expectations*. How were the expectations and dreams of Pip, Magwitch, Molly, Mrs. Havisham, and Estella destroyed or changed?

In a detailed essay, discuss the main characters’ expectations for their lives and how those expectations were changed. Use quotes and details from the story to support your discussion.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Reading Literature Standard 3 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Character Analysis in *The Glass Menagerie* (pilot)

The Glass Menagerie contains several memorable characters. Choose one of the characters and write an essay in which you analyze this character, considering issues such as his or her motivations, personal strengths and flaws, or internal conflicts. How does this character’s personality contribute to the ultimate outcome of the play?

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Character Development in Sparks’s *A Walk to Remember* (pilot)

A Walk to Remember, by Nicholas Sparks, tells the story of a 57-year-old man named Landon Carter, who tells the reader through flashbacks about a girl he loved when he was 17 and her eventual death from cancer. Among the many themes of the novel is the concept of change. Several characters have changed throughout the course of the story due to the influence of particular characters, life-changing events, and meaningful experiences.

In a well-developed essay, explain how and why one or more characters change and develop throughout the course of the novel, while providing examples from the text to support your response.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12
Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* (pilot)

In Charles Dickens' famous novel, *A Christmas Carol*, Ebenezer Scrooge is visited by three ghosts who help him realize that he is not the man he should be. When he is invited to view his own gravestone by the Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come, Scrooge implores: "Men's courses will foreshadow certain ends, to which, if persevered in, they must lead. But if the courses be departed from, the ends will change. Say it is thus with what you show me."

What do you think Scrooge meant when he said this? Do you think he followed his own conclusion? Write a multi-paragraph essay in which you discuss Scrooge's quote and how he tried to live up to it. Be sure to include specific details from the text to support your understanding.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12
Reading Literature Standard 2 – Grades 9-10, 11-12
Common Themes in American Literature (pilot)

When you select a specific theme in literature, you will find that numerous works will focus on that particular theme, just in slightly different ways. Think of two or more texts from the eighteenth, nineteenth, or early twentieth century in American literature that focus on similar topics or themes. How do these works treat this particular theme?

In a detailed essay, analyze a specific theme in American literature common to two or more works from the same period. Remember to cite examples from each text in your response.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12
Reading Literature Standard 2 – Grades 9-10, 11-12
Comparing *Marigolds* and *I Remember Mama* (pilot)

Write a well-organized essay that compares a universal theme in *Marigolds* and *I Remember Mama*. Be sure to support important ideas and viewpoints through accurate and detailed references from each excerpt.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12
Reading Literature Standard 7 – Grades 9-10, 11-12
Comparing Versions of Greek Mythological Heroes (pilot)

There are many different versions of the heroic tales of Greek mythological figures. These myths have been reinterpreted in books, on stage, and on film, with each version presenting the hero in a different light.

In a multi-paragraph essay, discuss two or more versions of a heroic tale from Greek mythology. Be sure to include details about the heroic traits of main characters and how they are portrayed in each version.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Reading Literature Standard 3 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Creatures in the Harry Potter Book Series (pilot)

The Harry Potter series maintains a charming quality in each book with the appearance of different magical creatures. Some of these creatures play a pivotal role in the story and are very similar to creatures in mythology and folklore. How do some of these creatures influence events that happen in the novels?

In a well-developed essay, discuss one or more creatures from the Harry Potter series and the role they play in the development of the story. Include facts and details from the book(s) to support your discussion.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Critical Lens: Conflict in Literature (pilot)

Critical Lens:

“All conflict in literature is, in its simplest form, a struggle between good and evil.” —Anon

Write a multi-paragraph essay in which you analyze one or more literary texts that you have read from the perspective of the critical lens. Be sure to interpret the statement considering the literature, as well as agree or disagree with the statement as you have interpreted it. Support your position with specific details and references to literary devices (theme, characterization, setting, point of view) as found in the literature you have selected.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Critical Lens: Doing the Right Thing (pilot)

Critical Lens:

“It isn’t always easy to do the right thing.” —Anon

Write a multi-paragraph essay in which you analyze one or more literary texts that you have read from the perspective of the critical lens. Be sure to interpret the statement considering the literature, as well as agree or disagree with the statement as you have interpreted it. Support your position with specific details and references to literary devices (theme, characterization, setting, point of view) as found in the literature you have selected.

*Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12***Critical Lens: Evil Triumphs (pilot)**

Critical Lens:

“In literature evil often triumphs but never conquers.” —Anon

Write a multi-paragraph essay in which you analyze one or more literary texts that you have read from the perspective of the critical lens. Be sure to interpret the statement considering the literature, as well as agree or disagree with the statement as you have interpreted it. Support your position with specific details and references to literary devices (theme, characterization, setting, point of view) as found in the literature you have selected.

*Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12***Critical Lens: Gaining Wisdom through Failure (pilot)**

Critical Lens:

“Good people are good because they’ve come to wisdom through failure.” —William Saroyan

Write a multi-paragraph essay in which you analyze one or more literary texts that you have read from the perspective of the critical lens. Be sure to interpret the statement considering the literature, as well as agree or disagree with the statement as you have interpreted it. Support your position with specific details and references to literary devices (theme, characterization, setting, point of view) as found in the literature you have selected.

*Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12***Critical Lens: In a Dark Time . . . (pilot)**

Critical Lens:

“In a dark time the eye begins to see.” —Theodore Roethke

Write a multi-paragraph essay in which you analyze one or more literary texts that you have read from the perspective of the critical lens. Be sure to interpret the statement considering the literature, as well as agree or disagree with the statement as you have interpreted it. Support your position with specific details and references to literary devices (theme, characterization, setting, point of view) as found in the literature you have selected.

*Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12***Critical Lens: Person through Other Persons (pilot)**

Critical Lens:

“A person is a person through other persons.” —Archbishop Desmond Tutu

Write a multi-paragraph essay in which you analyze one or more literary texts that you have read from the perspective of the critical lens. Be sure to interpret the statement considering the literature, as well as agree or disagree with the statement as you have interpreted it. Support your position with specific details and references to literary devices (theme, characterization, setting, point of view) as found in the literature you have selected.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Critical Lens: Without Freedom, You Have Nothing (pilot)

Critical Lens:

“Without freedom, you have nothing.” —Anon

Write a multi-paragraph essay in which you analyze one or more literary texts that you have read from the perspective of the critical lens. Be sure to interpret the statement considering the literature, as well as agree or disagree with the statement as you have interpreted it. Support your position with specific details and references to literary devices (theme, characterization, setting, point of view) as found in the literature you have selected.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Reading Literature Standard 7 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Cultural Elements in Fairy Tales (pilot)

Fairy tales with the same theme and similar characters are common to many different cultures. For example, many cultures have their own version of “Cinderella.”

In a well-developed essay, compare and contrast cultural elements from versions of the same fairy tale from different cultures. Include examples from the stories to support your discussion.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Reading Literature Standard 6 – Grades 9-10

Cultural Experiences Reflected in World Literature (pilot)

We can learn a lot about other cultures and the world from reading world literature. What types of cultural experiences or attitudes are reflected in a piece of literature due to the setting, characters’ actions, or other story elements?

In a detailed essay, analyze a particular cultural experience or perspective reflected in a non-American literary work. Remember to refer to the literary work to support your analysis.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12
Death of a Salesman: Social Commentary (pilot)

In *Death of a Salesman*, Willy Loman spends his days striving for a major achievement, only to find that his dreams of wealth and success have a very large price tag. How does Arthur Miller use the Loman family as an example to show the negative effects of living for the "American Dream?"

In a multi-paragraph essay, describe how Arthur Miller uses this play as a social commentary on the modern business life. How does he prove that striving for the "American Dream" is not always the positive experience the 1950s depicted? Be sure to include specific details and examples to support your response.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12
Dinner with Walter Mitty (pilot)

In *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty* by James Thurber, the main character is quite fascinating and intriguing, although his mind is rarely grounded in reality. Imagine that you have just been invited to have dinner with Walter Mitty. Based on your impressions of Walter from the story you read, write an essay explaining if you think Walter would or would not be a good dinner companion. Include details from the text to support your opinion.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12
Reading Literature Standard 9 – Grades 9-10
Drawing on Source Material in a Literary Work (pilot)

Since Shakespeare's day, authors have been drawing on and transforming source material in the development of new literary works. Shakespeare drew themes and topics from classics and the Bible, and later authors drew on Shakespearean plays when developing their ideas for new written works. In a detailed essay, analyze how an author draws on and transforms source material in the development of a specific literary work. Remember to provide textual support to strengthen your response.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12
Duality in Claude McKay's Poems (pilot)

Claude McKay, a Harlem Renaissance poet, creates duality in his poems "America" and "The White House." Within both poems lie McKay's views of the disenfranchised African American. McKay sees African Americans as having the unique perspective of being Americans, yet also being black in the Jim Crow "separate but equal" era of this country's history.

Imagine that you are an African American living in the Jim Crow era of separatism and discrimination. After reading both poems, in a detailed essay, discuss the frustration and optimism the author encounters as an American living during this time. Use examples and lines from the poems to support your response.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Emerson's Attitude toward Snow in "The Snowstorm" (pilot)

After reading Ralph Waldo Emerson's poem "The Snowstorm," think about Emerson's attitude toward snow. Then, think about how your attitude toward snow compares with Emerson's.

In a detailed essay, compare and contrast the connections between the text ideas and your own experiences, by first explaining Emerson's attitude toward snow in the poem, and then comparing and contrasting that with your own thoughts and experiences with snow. Provide examples and images and cite lines from the text to support your response.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Reading Literature Standard 2 – Grades 9-10

Endurance in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (pilot)

In the novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini, Miriam and her mother, Nana, have a meaningful conversation after Miriam mentions her desire to go to school.

Nana: "There's only one, one skill a woman like you and me needs in life and they don't teach it in school. Look at me." [. . .] "Look at me."

Miriam did.

Nana: "Only one skill. And it's this: tahamul. Endure."

In a well-developed essay, discuss how "endurance" is a recurring theme throughout the novel for both Miriam and Laila. Be sure to provide solid details along with analysis of significant moments in the novel for support.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Epiphany in *The Dubliners* (pilot)

In James Joyce's collection of short stories, *The Dubliners*, each protagonist experiences a moment of realization, a sudden recognition of some kind that changes his or her view of him or herself and social condition.

Write a multi-paragraph essay in which you discuss one of Joyce's short stories, the epiphany experienced by the protagonist, and how this realization changes his or her outlook on life. Be sure to support your analysis with significant details from the text.

Reading Literature Standard 1 - Grades 9-10, 11-12

Reading Literature Standard 3 - Grades 9-10, 11-12

Exile in *Wuthering Heights* (pilot)

Palestinian-American literary theorist and cultural critic, Edward Said, has written that, “Exile is strangely compelling to think about, but terrible to experience. It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted.” Yet, Said also claims that exile can become “a potent, even enriching” experience.

In literature, exile can involve a character being cut off from birthplace, family, homeland, or another special place. Write a well-developed essay in which you analyze how Heathcliff’s experience with exile is both alienating and enriching, and how this experience illuminates the meaning of *Wuthering Heights* as a whole. Be sure to include specific details from the novel to support your discussion.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Experiences and Friendships in *Holes* by Louis Sachar (pilot)

Throughout life, the various events we experience and relationships we have can influence us and change our personalities and characters. Stanley Yelnats, the protagonist in the novel *Holes*, changes and develops throughout the story because of his experiences and friendships with the other characters he meets at Camp Green Lake.

In a detailed essay, compare and contrast Stanley’s character and personality at the beginning of the novel with who he becomes in the end. Be sure to describe how his various experiences and the friendships he makes influence him to become the person he is now. Remember to include various details and examples from the novel to support your response.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Reading Literature Standard 2 – Grades 9-10

Fear as a Theme in *Frankenstein* (pilot)

There are a variety of themes that parallel both Mary Shelley’s life and her novel *Frankenstein*. One of these themes is the fear of giving birth, which is a central idea in the novel and a feeling Shelley experienced in real life.

In a multi-paragraph essay, discuss the theme of the fear of giving birth as it applies to both Mary Shelley’s life and her novel *Frankenstein*. Be sure to give specific examples to support your discussion.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Foreshadowing in *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* (pilot)

Authors often use foreshadowing, which is the use of clues or hints to suggest what might happen in a story. Write a multi-paragraph essay describing Washington Irving's use of foreshadowing in *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*. Use specific examples and details from the text in your explanation.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Foreshadowing Ma Joad's Role in *The Grapes of Wrath* (pilot)

Events in chapter 8 of *The Grapes of Wrath* foreshadow Ma Joad's eventual role as the leader of the Joad family. What techniques does Steinbeck employ to develop Ma Joad's character?

In a detailed essay, discuss the techniques that Steinbeck uses in chapter 8 to foreshadow Ma Joad's eventual role as the leader of the family. Use details from chapter 8 to support your discussion.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

***Gifted Hands and the Role of Others* (pilot)**

"I am who I am because of everyone." -Ben Carson

As shown in the quote above, Dr. Ben Carson never discounted the role of others in his success. Throughout his autobiography, *Gifted Hands: The Ben Carson Story*, Dr. Carson credits others with contributing significantly to successes in his personal life and in his career as an accomplished neurosurgeon.

In a well-developed essay, relate the importance of relationships in terms of Dr. Carson's, as well as your own success. Include details from your life and Dr. Carson's life to support your discussion.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Gothic Elements in *Twilight* by Stephenie Meyer (pilot)

The novel *Twilight*, written by Stephenie Meyer, focuses on a young girl's romance with a boy who is really a vampire. The novel explores some traditional literary elements, such as romance and the supernatural, which are commonly seen in gothic literature. Think about how these elements function in the story. What elements of gothic literature do you see in *Twilight*? How do they contribute to the overall effect of the story?

In a detailed essay, discuss the elements of gothic literature seen in the novel, especially those pertaining to romance and the supernatural, as well as how these elements effect and contribute to the story. Be sure to include examples from the text to support your response.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Government Control in 1984 (pilot)

In George Orwell's novel 1984, the state uses numerous methods to control the people including perpetual war and surveillance. Terms that reflect government control like doublethink, Newspeak, memory hole, and thought crime are used throughout.

Write a multi-paragraph essay discussing the methods of control used by the state in George Orwell's 1984 and why they were effective. Be sure to use examples from the text in your response.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Great Expectations: What is a Gentleman? (pilot)

The word “gentleman” can be defined in several ways, based on a man’s pedigree or behavior. In Charles Dickens’s *Great Expectations*, there are several characters who may or may not be considered gentlemen, depending on the definition used.

In a multi-paragraph essay, define “gentleman” and apply that definition to classify Pip’s, Joe’s, Magwitch’s, Herbert’s, and Mr. Jaggers’s characters. Use quotes and details from the book to support your classification of each character.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Heart of Darkness (pilot)

In Joseph Conrad’s novella, *Heart of Darkness*, the author makes the case that people are capable of doing horrible things when there are no rules and laws of civilization.

Using the text as well as your own personal experience, compare and contrast what people do when there are no rules or laws governing them versus what they do when there are.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

House as a Metaphor in *The House on Mango Street* (pilot)

In Sandra Cisneros’s novel *The House on Mango Street*, describe the ways in which the house is used as a metaphor for the self. How is the house in which Esperanza lives on Mango Street used as an image of everything she does not want to be? What does Esperanza say are the perfect ingredients of a house?

In a well-developed essay, describe how the house in *The House on Mango Street* is an image of everything Esperanza does not want to be. Use details from the story to support your description.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Reading Literature Standard 7 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

How Directors' Decisions Impact Movies (pilot)

Directors can make decisions that greatly affect the way an audience feels about a movie. These decisions might include changing the way a character is played, the way technology is used, or the choice to include or exclude scenes. After viewing two movie versions of the same story, compare each director's decisions and how they impact the movie. What is the difference between scenes in each version? How do these differences affect the way you feel about the movie? Do you prefer one version over the other?

In a multi-paragraph essay, describe decisions the directors made that influenced the way you felt about each movie. Include details about specific scenes, technological effects, and character portrayal for support.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Human Nature in Literature (pilot)

Consider a piece of literature you have read. What does this story convey about human nature? In what ways does it remind you of people you have known or experiences you have had, read about, or seen in the movies or on television?

In a multi-paragraph essay, discuss a piece of literature and its view of human nature. Use details and examples from the story for support.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Reading Literature Standard 2 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Reading Literature Standard 4 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

"I heard a fly buzz—when I died" (pilot)

Emily Dickinson's famous poem "I heard a fly buzz—when I died" uses a variety of literary devices in its depiction of death. Some of the literary devices used include similes, metaphors, alliteration, and assonance. Even capitalization and hyphens are also used to create a specific desired effect.

In a detailed essay, discuss several literary devices used in relation to the meaning of the poem and its theme of death. Remember to cite examples and lines from the text in your analysis.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Impact of the Great Depression in *Out of the Dust* (pilot)

The Great Depression affected the lives of all Americans. They had to be resilient, resourceful, and strong in order to survive. The government had to create programs to boost the economy and provide relief to those hit hard by the economic crisis. In *Out of the Dust* by Karen Hesse, the characters' lives

were affected not only by the Great Depression, but also by the withering drought that caused the region to be nicknamed the Dust Bowl.

In a well-developed essay, discuss how the conditions of the Great Depression impacted Billie Jo and her family in the story *Out of the Dust*. Include facts, details, and examples to support your discussion.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Reading Literature Standard 3 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Influential Characters in *Dorian Gray* (pilot)

In Oscar Wilde’s novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Dorian Gray changes from a kind, young man to a corrupt, evil, old man. In the novel, various characters lead to Dorian’s downfall, as he is negatively influenced by other characters.

In a detailed essay, discuss how the particular influence of several characters leads to Dorian’s downfall. Use references to the novel to support your discussion.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Innocence in *The Catcher in the Rye* (pilot)

One of the major themes in J.D. Salinger's novel *The Catcher in the Rye* is the value of innocence. Throughout the story, the main character, Holden Caulfield, struggles with his own innocence and the innocence of those around him.

In a multi-paragraph essay, describe how the author portrays Holden's issues surrounding innocence. Include details from the story to support your description.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Is Friar Lawrence Guilty of Murder? (pilot)

Imagine you are a prosecution or defense attorney at the trial of Friar Lawrence. Is the Friar guilty of second-degree murder in the deaths of Romeo and Juliet? Would you prefer to defend or accuse him?

In a multi-paragraph essay, present your closing arguments either defending or accusing Friar Lawrence of second-degree murder in the deaths of Romeo and Juliet. Be sure to use evidence from the play to support your position, and include a counterargument.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12
Reading Literature Standard 4 – Grades 9-10, 11-12
Journal of Columbus's First Voyage to America (pilot)

In the historical passage from *Journal of the First Voyage to America*, Christopher Columbus provides a firsthand account of his encounter with the island of San Salvador during his voyage to America in the 1450s. He provides many details about what he saw when reaching the island. After reading the passage, how would you describe Columbus's feelings toward the island? What are some of his first impressions/descriptions of the land and its people?

In a well-developed essay, provide details and cite specific vocabulary from the passage that convey Columbus's feelings toward and description of, the island and people.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12
Reading Literature Standard 3 – Grades 9-10, 11-12
"Jury Duty" (pilot)

In the story "Jury Duty" the narrator learns what it is like to be summoned for jury duty. His or her experiences are revealed through two journal entries.

Write an essay in which you describe how the narrator's view and understanding of jury duty changes from the beginning of the story to the end. How does his or her exposure to this experience change his or her outlook on this responsibility? Use details and examples from the story to support your ideas.

Jury Duty

April 4, 2004

As an American citizen, I really have only three responsibilities: to obey the law, pay taxes, and serve on a jury when called. For the past five or six years, I have certainly met the first two responsibilities (most of the time ...), but I never expected to be called for jury duty. Today I met my third civic responsibility, and luckily it lasted only one day. I had never been summonsed before, so I had no clue about what to expect. All I knew was I had to be at the courthouse for jury duty by 8 A.M. and expect to stay at least until 5 P.M. What would transpire in between was anybody's guess.

When I arrived, I was searched for weapons and directed to the fifth floor to check in. The guys standing behind the counter on the fifth floor in their starched white and blue uniforms and shiny gold badges looked up my name on a giant computer printout and then handed me a small yellow card stating "Panel 5, Seat 1." Seat 1, I thought, wondering if I would be the foreperson who pronounces the murderer guilty as charged just before the courtroom erupts into chaos and the judge hammers on his desk shouting, "Order in the court, order in the court!" Hey, I thought, this could be my moment to shine, my fifteen minutes of fame; but the clerk's next announcement burst my bubble.

"Each of you has received a yellow card with a panel and seat number," said the clerk. "Several panels will be called at once to proceed to the courtroom. These panels will not necessarily be called in numerical order and do not represent the jury on which you will eventually serve. They will, however,

direct how you get assigned to a jury, so please listen carefully each time I make an announcement. If you leave this room to take care of any personal business, report back no later than 8:30."

I selected a vacant seat and surveyed what was to be my new home for the next several hours. For such a populated place, the jury pool was extraordinarily quiet. Cell phones were prohibited, so this room full of strangers occupied themselves with puzzles, pacing, books, newspapers, or just staring off into space.

As I observed all these strangers, though, I noticed that we were a diverse group. We represented every skin color from palest white to deepest brown, and every age from the newly anointed voters to the ancient who have voted in every election since Roosevelt.

I also got to thinking about why we were all there. The decisions we were going to make could profoundly affect someone's life. If we were called to a criminal trial, we would decide whether or not someone went to jail. A civil trial might decide which parent takes care of a child or which company has to pay restitution and potentially be driven out of business. These were no small matters, and they would be decided by the likes of an art history major, a briefcase-toting businessman in a pinstripe suit, a young guy in baggy jeans, and a nervous, bird-like lady who couldn't seem to sit still. The only thing we had in common was that we could get ourselves to the courthouse, we could vote, and we lived in the same district. We had no particular expertise other than having lived our own individual lives, varied as they were.

I was unexpectedly moved by the seriousness and importance of our charge. As the elderly judge said during our orientation, government by the people, of the people, and for the people was a serious undertaking. The U.S. government was relying on people like me to weigh the evidence, determine the truth, and make a decision. I actually began to feel quite nervous as I thought about it all.

April 5, 2004

As it turned out, I never actually served on a jury. But I was impaneled, questioned, and excused from a civil trial that was expected to last three weeks. Although I am relieved not to have to suspend my life and jeopardize my young career for three weeks right now, I hope to serve on a jury at least once in my life and experience the process from beginning to end. At least next time I'll know better what to expect.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Letter to Clarence Darrow (pilot)

In the play *Inherit the Wind*, the Scopes Monkey Trial is portrayed as a landmark court case regarding the teaching of Darwin's theory of evolution in public schools. The basic argument centered on what should and should not be allowed to be taught in public schools. If you were a spectator at the trial, would you have agreed with the verdict?

As a spectator at the Scopes Monkey Trial, write a letter to Clarence Darrow articulating your position on teaching Darwin's theory of evolution in public schools. Include details from the play to support your position.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12
***Like Water for Chocolate* (pilot)**

Like Water for Chocolate is a novel about a mother's relationships with her daughters. As the story unfolds, it becomes clear that the mother has a different kind of relationship with each of her three daughters. Write an essay in which you compare and contrast the relationships the mother has with each of her daughters.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12
Reading Literature Standard 5 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Looking at Structure in a Literary Work (pilot)

When an author composes a literary work, he or she must make many decisions. One of these decisions concerns how to structure specific parts of a text. For example, an author must decide where to begin or end a story, how to order the events, and whether to provide a comedic or tragic resolution.

In a detailed essay, analyze a particular author's choices regarding structure in a novel, play, or short story, and discuss the impact these choices have on the overall structure, meaning, and effect of the work. Remember to provide examples from the text in your response.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Main Idea in “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” (pilot)

T.S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" is a unique poem that encompasses several ideas and can be interpreted on various levels: emotional, political, spiritual. After carefully reading "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," decide what you think is its main idea. Write a multi-paragraph essay examining how this main idea is portrayed in the poem and analyzing its significance. Make sure to include details and examples from the poem to support your argument.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12
Reading Literature Standard 3 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Marguerite as Narrator of Maya Angelou's Life (pilot)

Maya Angelou, author of *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, classifies this book as an autobiography. However, many of Angelou's critics choose to categorize it as autobiographical fiction. These critics make the argument that Angelou's choice to use Marguerite, a child narrator, limits much of the detail given in the story. They also claim that this child's voice gives a very fictional quality to some of the most important events in the narrative because it lacks the knowledge of the adult Angelou. Therefore, although the framework of the book is true, many of the details given in this perspective become fictional.

Do you believe that Marguerite is a reliable narrator for the story of Angelou's life? In a well-developed essay, choose whether or not you feel that Marguerite can be totally trusted with the story of

Angelou's life. Does she put a child's slant onto many of the events in the novel making them somewhat unbelievable? Include details from the narrative to support your opinion.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Mary's Behavior in "Lamb to the Slaughter" (pilot)

The ending of Roald Dahl's "Lamb to the Slaughter" is ambiguous and could be interpreted in several possible ways. Write a well-developed essay offering your explanation for Mary's behavior at the conclusion of the story and what you feel it reveals about her character. Support your answer using examples and details from the text.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Reading Literature Standard 7 – Grades 11-12

Movie from a Literary Work (pilot)

Movie producers select literary works to make into movies based on the profit which can be made from the venture. If you were a movie producer, and you were not restricted by the need to make a profit, what literary work would you make into a full-length film or movie short? Why do you think your selection would make a good movie?

In a well-developed essay, describe the film or movie short that you would develop from a piece of literature. Include references to the literature to support your description.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Reading Literature Standard 7 – Grades 11-12

Movies Reflect Audience Values (pilot)

Stories and movies reflect values that are often shared by the audience. A remake of a movie is typically a good representation of the nature of the time as seen in graphics, film technique, storyline, set design, wardrobe, etc. View two versions of the same movie and observe differences, including how the movie is intended to affect the audience and how characters are presented. Are the values reflected significantly different in each movie?

In a multi-paragraph essay, discuss the differences in two versions of a movie and how the differences reflect the values of the audience. Include facts and details from the movies to support your discussion.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

***Much Ado About Nothing*: Compare/Contrast (pilot)**

Much Ado About Nothing is a play with many contrasting characters. In a well-developed essay, compare and contrast two of the characters and how those characters deal with relationships. Consider the pros and cons of both characters' approaches, and make a clear judgment concerning the

effectiveness of their approaches to relationships. Remember to include specific details and examples from the play in your essay.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Reading Literature Standard 3 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Names in *Song of Solomon* by Toni Morrison (pilot)

In *Song of Solomon*, Toni Morrison uses biblical and literary names and nicknames to enhance characters' identities and explain their behavior. How do these names add meaning to the story? How are the changes in names and places significant?

In a well-written essay, apply one or more of the critical lenses (historic, Marxist, feminist, psychoanalytic, etc.) to explain the meaning, significance, and symbolism of at least two names in *Song of Solomon*. Be sure to cite specific examples from the novel to support your explanation.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Nora's Decision in *A Doll's House* (pilot)

In Henrik Ibsen's dramatic play, *A Doll's House*, Nora, the protagonist of the play, went from being a devoted wife and mother in the beginning, to a woman who walks out on her husband and children in order to gain her independence and start a new life for herself. What do you think of her decision? If you were in Nora's shoes, would you have made the same decision? Why or why not?

In a detailed essay, explain whether you agree or disagree with Nora's decision, and discuss what you would have done if you were in her place. Make sure to support your response with examples and quotes from the text.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Reading Literature Standard 4 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

"Nothing Gold Can Stay" (pilot)

"Nothing Gold Can Stay" is considered one of Robert Frost's best poems. It helped him receive the first of four Pulitzer prizes. How does Frost use devices like symbolism, imagery, simile, metaphor, repetition, etc., to convey meaning in this poem?

After reading the poem, write an essay analyzing the meaning of the poem and the methods Frost uses to convey meaning. You should discuss both a literal and figurative interpretation of the poem.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Reading Literature Standard 3 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest (pilot)

In Ken Kesey's 1962 novel, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, Nurse Ratched uses several subtle methods of control over the mental institution's patients. Her methods are especially insidious because often the characters don't even realize they are being controlled. How do the attitude and methods of Nurse Ratched affect the patients? What role does her ability to control the patients play in the story?

Write a multi-paragraph essay describing the methods Nurse Ratched uses to control the characters in the novel and the importance of her manipulations to the story.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Reading Literature Standard 3 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Opposing Forces in Wuthering Heights (pilot)

In Emily Bronte's novel, *Wuthering Heights*, Thrushcross Grange and Wuthering Heights are two distinct houses connected by familial ties which symbolize both the cultural and social distinctions among those who dwell there.

In a multi-paragraph essay, discuss the symbolic characteristics of each house and how they are shown through the characters who reside there. What effect do these distinctions have on the outcome of the novel? Be sure to support your analysis with significant details from the text.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Paying for Your Actions in True West (pilot)

"People pay for what they do, and still more for what they have allowed themselves to become. And they pay for it very simply; by the lives they lead." -James A. Baldwin

After reading Sam Shepard's *True West*, consider how Baldwin's quote applies to the characters Austin and Lee. What type of people have they allowed themselves to become and how have they paid for their actions?

In a well-organized essay, explain how Baldwin's quote applies to the characters Austin and Lee. Be sure to use specific details and examples from the text to support your response.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Poetic Devices in "A Dream Deferred" (pilot)

After reading the poem "A Dream Deferred" by Langston Hughes, explain how the elements of tone, symbolism, and imagery are used to convey Hughes' message. Do these elements help the reader to better understand the meaning behind the poem?

In a well-developed essay, examine the poetic devices used in the text. Be sure to include details and examples to support your explanation.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12
Poetic Devices in "Mirror" by Sylvia Plath (pilot)

In the poem "Mirror," Sylvia Plath sheds light on the realities mirrors reflect and their importance to all of us. After carefully reading "Mirror," write a multi-paragraph essay analyzing the author's use of poetic devices such as figurative language and imagery to convey her theme. Use specific details and examples to explain how she uses various techniques such as sentence structure, tone, and diction.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12
Poetic Devices in "Tonight I Can Write" (pilot)

Carefully read "Tonight I Can Write" by Pablo Neruda. Write an essay analyzing how the author uses poetic devices such as repetition, imagery, and figurative language to convey the speaker's emotional state and attitude toward his love. Use details and examples from the poem to support your interpretation.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12
Reality and Illusion (pilot)

A theme that often comes up in literature is the contrast between reality and illusion. What are some of the potential conflicts that occur when one person's reality is another person's illusion?

In a multi-paragraph essay, discuss the conflicts that can occur when one person's reality is another person's illusion. Include references to literary works to support your discussion.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12
Relating to Characters in "The First Seven Years" (pilot)

Bernard Malamud's realistic short story "The First Seven Years" features a number of characters that most readers can easily understand and relate to. Select the character from "The First Seven Years" who you feel is most like you or who has gone through experiences similar to your own. In a multi-paragraph essay, examine how and why you relate well to this character, focusing on shared characteristics or experiences. Use examples and details from the text and your own life in your analysis.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Relationships in Seamus Heaney's Poem "Follower"(pilot)

The poem "Follower," by Seamus Heaney, is about the relationship between a father and son. How does the son feel toward his father, and how does their relationship change as they get older?

In a detailed essay, analyze the relationship between the father and his son by specifically explaining how the son feels toward his father. Remember to cite particular lines and vocabulary from the poem to support your response.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Responsibility in *Othello* (pilot)

In William Shakespeare's *Othello*, Iago hatches a plan that ultimately destroys Othello's wife Desdemona. As the story unfolds, however, it is evident that many characters play a vital role in the events that lead to her tragic death. Write an essay in which you identify which character(s) you believe is (are) ultimately to blame for Desdemona's death and why the character(s) is (are) to blame.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Role of Literature in S.E. Hinton's *The Outsiders* (pilot)

Published in 1967, *The Outsiders*, by S.E. Hinton, details the lives of two rival groups of teenage boys divided by social and economic class in the 1960s. Violence, prejudice, and class conflict pervade the novel. However, various references to specific works of literature are made throughout the story. What role do these works of literature appear to play in the novel?

In a well-developed essay, discuss the role of literature in *The Outsiders* by providing various examples and quotations from the text.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Reading Literature Standard 7 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

***Romeo and Juliet* and *West Side Story* (pilot)**

The 1961 film *West Side Story* is largely based on Shakespeare's tragic play, *Romeo and Juliet*. After viewing the film and reading the play, examine their similarities and differences. What decisions made in the making of the film change it from its source material?

Write a multi-paragraph essay comparing and contrasting the play *Romeo and Juliet* and the film *West Side Story*. Be sure to consider characters, setting, and plot. Include specific examples and details from the play and the film to support your response.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12
Reading Literature Standard 9 – Grades 9-10, 11-12
Satire in Voltaire's *Candide* (pilot)

Satire has been described as optimism disguised as pessimism. In a multi-paragraph essay, analyze this description in Voltaire's *Candide*, citing specific examples from the work that demonstrate his opinions of political and social conditions in eighteenth century France.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12
Reading Literature Standard 2 – Grades 9-10, 11-12
***Scarlet Letter* and *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (pilot)**

Although they take place in two very different settings, *The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne and *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston are two novels that share a variety of themes, especially since Hester and Janie, the protagonists of the two novels, share some similar experiences in their tragic lives.

In a detailed essay, discuss a common theme you can find between the two literary works. Make sure to provide supporting details and examples from the text, including direct quotes from both texts.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12
Reading Literature Standard 3 – Grades 9-10, 11-12
Self-Realization in *Great Expectations* (pilot)

In Charles Dickens' novel, *Great Expectations*, Pip constantly yearns for self-improvement rather than accepting the life he leads. He eventually learns that ambition and desire for advancement doesn't always lead to one's happiness.

In a multi-paragraph essay, describe the events that lead to Pip's transformation of character. What does he eventually realize is the key to his own happiness? Be sure to include specific details and examples from the text to support your response.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12
Reading Literature Standard 3 – Grades 9-10, 11-12
Setting in *Heart of Darkness* (pilot)

Joseph Conrad, the author of *Heart of Darkness*, uses the various settings of the novel to influence both Marlowe and Kurtz in their journeys along the Congo River. How does the setting affect each of these characters differently?

In a multi-paragraph essay, describe how the setting affects both Marlowe and Kurtz in unique ways. Be sure to include specific details from the text to support your conclusions.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12
Reading Literature Standard 4 – Grades 9-10, 11-12
Shakespeare's *Henry IV* (pilot)

The two passages that follow are from Shakespeare's play *Henry IV*, Part I. Both passages deal with the concept of honor (spelled "honour"). In the first passage, Hotspur, a young nobleman, discusses with other characters his unhappiness with the present King. As Worcester proposes a plot, "a matter deep and dangerous," Hotspur responds in a way that reveals his conception of "honour." In the second passage we see Falstaff, a character known more for his wit and drinking than for his ambition or courage. On the eve of battle, he also reveals a view of "honour."

Read the two passages below carefully. Then, in a well-organized essay, show how word choice and figurative language reveal the differences between Hotspur's and Falstaff's views of honor. Develop your ideas by making specific references to the texts.

Passage 1

Worcester [to Hotspur]: Peace cousin, say no more. And now I will unclasp a secret book, And to your quick-conceiving discontents I'll read you matter deep and dangerous, As full of peril and adventurous spirit, As to o'er-walk a current roaring loud, On the unsteadfast [shaky] footing of a spear.

Hotspur: If he fall in, good night-or sink or swim. Send danger from the east unto the west, So honour cross it from the north to south, And let them grapple. O the blood more stirs To rouse a lion than to start [flush from cover] a hare.

Northumberland: Imagination of some great exploit Drives him beyond the bounds of patience.

Hotspur: By heaven methinks it were an easy leap, To pluck bright honour from the pale-faced moon, Or dive into the bottom of the deep, Where fathom-line could never touch the ground, And pluck up drowned honour by the locks, So he that doth redeem her thence might wear Without corrival [any rival] all her dignities.

Passage 2

Prince Henry: Say thy prayers, and farewell.

Falstaff: I would 'twere bedtime, Hal [the Prince's nickname], and all well.

Prince Henry: Why, thou owest God a death. [He exits]

Falstaff: 'Tis not due yet, I would be loth [reluctant] to pay him before his day. What need I be so forward with him that calls not on me? Well, 'tis no matter, honour pricks [spurs] me on; yea, but how if honour prick me off [kill me] when I come on, how then? Can honour set to a leg? No. Or an arm? No. Or take away the grief of a wound? No. Honour hath no skill in surgery then? No. What is honour? A word. What is in that word honour? What is that honour? Air-a trim reckoning [worthless payoff]. Who hath it? He that died a Wednesday. Doth he feel it? No. Doth he hear it? No. 'Tis insensible then?

Yea, to the dead. But will it not live with the living? No. Why? Detraction [envious gossip] will not suffer [allow] it. Therefore I'll (have) none of it-honour is a mere 'scutcheon [decoration], and so ends my catechism [lesson].

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Social and Political Issues in *Gulliver's Travels* (pilot)

In *Gulliver's Travels*, Jonathan Swift creates several imaginary and fanciful lands. As Gulliver learns more about the inhabitants and cultures of these lands, the reader is invited to think about how social and political issues in these imaginary cultures shed light on the problems and challenges of our own time.

Identify an important social or political issue from one of the lands that Gulliver visits. Write an essay in which you discuss how this issue or problem manifests itself in the imaginary land. What do you think are the implications of this issue for people living in your culture?

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Struggle and Growth in *Warriors Don't Cry* (pilot)

Warriors Don't Cry is the story of Melba Pattillo Beals and her experiences as one of the Little Rock Nine. Beals made history by participating in the process of integrating Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1957. These experiences shaped both Beals's life and the formation of the Civil Rights Movement.

In a detailed essay, explain the significance of Beals's struggle and how her experiences affected her personal development and the development of the Civil Rights Movement. Include details and examples from the book to support your explanation.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Reading Literature Standard 4 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Style in "Geraldo No Last Name" by Sandra Cisneros (pilot)

When reading a short story by Sandra Cisneros, it is easy to distinguish her unique and effective writing style. After carefully reading the story "Geraldo No Last Name," write a multi-paragraph essay examining how Cisneros creates a defined and distinctive voice in this story. Provide specific examples to explain how she uses various techniques such as sentence structure, tone, and diction.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Symbolism of the Ibis in "The Scarlet Ibis" (pilot)

In the short story "The Scarlet Ibis" by James Hurst, the scarlet ibis bird becomes a symbol for the life and death of Doodle.

In a multi-paragraph essay, compare and contrast the scarlet ibis to Doodle and his life. Include quotes and details from the story to support your assertions.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

The Appeal of Dystopian Literature (pilot)

There is a current trend in young adult reading, and it is not *Harry Potter* or *Twilight* any more. While dark fantasy is still popular, teens are now interested in something that appears even darker: dystopian science fiction.

Why do you think dystopian literature and film are currently popular among teens? In a multi-paragraph essay, explain the popularity of dystopian fiction among teens by analyzing the characteristics of a dystopian young adult novel and another fictional dystopian source, and relate them to the experiences and expectations of modern teens.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

"The Demon Lover" (pilot)

Elizabeth Bowen's "The Demon Lover" tells the story of Mrs. Drover as she returns to her old home, left abandoned and damaged after World War II. Mrs. Drover experiences many strange feelings after she reads a letter found in the vacant house. After reading the story, do you think Mrs. Drover is haunted by a ghost, stalked by someone, or did she go insane?

In a well-developed essay, discuss whether you believe Mrs. Drover is being haunted, stalked, or is insane. Include details, examples, and other evidence from the text for support.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

The Harlem Renaissance (pilot)

During the Harlem Renaissance, African-American art, music, and poetry became very popular. Based on the works you have read from that time period, write an essay explaining what message the authors of this time period were trying to communicate with their poems. Be sure to include details and examples from various texts you have read.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

The Hunger Games: Survival and Conflict (pilot)

In the first chapters of *The Hunger Games*, by Suzanne Collins, it is clear that Katniss has a strong partnership and close friendship with Gale. As she enters the Games, she begins to consider whether she loves him. During these same chapters, Katniss feels that she owes Peeta something for having given her bread so long ago, but she does not really know him. Her priority is to survive for the sake of her family and for Gale. When Peeta confesses to the interviewer that he does not expect a fairy-tale

ending because the girl he really likes is also in the Games, Katniss thinks he is just trying to trick her or make her seem weak.

How do her feelings change over the course of the novel? How much is real? How much is just show in order to keep both Peeta and herself alive? In the last chapter, Peeta hesitantly says to Katniss, “So, what you’re saying is, these last few days and then I guess ... back in the arena ... that was just some strategy you two [Katniss and Haymitch] worked out.”

In a well-developed essay, discuss what Katniss truly feels and whether she is sincere or if Peeta has just been played (fooled). Use examples from the story to support your interpretation.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

"The Minister's Black Veil" (pilot)

Nathaniel Hawthorne's parable "The Minister's Black Veil" is a critique of society and human nature. In a multi-paragraph essay, explain what lesson or moral Hawthorne was trying to teach the reader. Make sure to include examples and details from the text to support your answer.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

The Nature of Leadership in *Henry the IV Part I* (pilot)

William Shakespeare uses the characters Prince Hal and Henry Percy (Hotspur) to illustrate changes in social views of leadership in the time of Henry the IV. Prince Hal portrays an outwardly spoiled, immature leader who fails to live up to his potential, while inwardly remaining a cunning opportunist waiting to show his true nature. Hotspur, on the other hand, portrays a man of honor who, although quick-tempered, does not hide or scheme. During their final battle Prince Hal surprisingly defeats Hotspur, and a new era begins.

What is this new era to which Shakespeare alludes, and how are the characters of Prince Hal and Hotspur used to communicate Shakespeare's belief in the changing nature of leadership at that time? Be sure to support your analysis with meaningful references to the play.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

The Old Year vs. The New Year (pilot)

New Year's Day signals a time for change and renewal. Many people even make resolutions in an attempt to break old habits and better their personal lives. Read the poem "The Old Year," and in an insightful response, connect the poem with your past and present experiences. In your own life, how might this year be different or better than last year?

The Old Year

The Old Year's gone away

To nothingness and night:
 We cannot find him all the day
 Nor hear him in the night:
 He left no footstep, mark or place
 In either shade or sun:
 The last year he'd a neighbour's face,
 In this he's known by none.

All nothing everywhere:
 Mists we on mornings see
 Have more of substance when they're here
 And more of form than he.
 He was a friend by every fire,
 In every cot and hall -
 A guest to every heart's desire,
 And now he's nought at all.

Old papers thrown away,
 Old garments cast aside,
 The talk of yesterday,
 Are things identified;
 But time once torn away
 No voices can recall:
 The eve of New Year's Day
 Left the Old Year lost to all.

John Clare (1793 - 1864), English Poet

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

“The Story of an Hour” - The Joy that Kills (pilot)

Carefully read Kate Chopin's “The Story of an Hour.”

The cause of Mrs. Mallard's sudden death has multiple interpretations. In a well-developed essay, explain what you conclude to be the cause of her sudden death. Be sure to include specific details from the story to support your reasoning and explanation.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Reading Literature Standard 2 – Grades 9-10

The Sun Also Rises and the Lost Generation (pilot)

The Sun Also Rises, Hemingway's first major novel, explores the lives of several Americans in Europe in the 1920s, during the post-World World I era. The main characters fall into the category of the "Lost Generation," referring to the generation of Americans living their lives aimlessly and recklessly after

the war. In what ways do the characters of the novel embody the "Lost Generation"? What are some examples in the novel that illustrate this idea?

In a well-developed essay, discuss the concept of the "Lost Generation" as it applies to the characters in Hemingway's novel, *The Sun Also Rises*, and provide details and examples from the text to support your response.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Reading Literature Standard 4 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

"The Tide Rises, The Tide Falls" (pilot)

In the poem "The Tide Rises, The Tide Falls," Longfellow comments on the innate characteristics of the natural world. After carefully reading "The Tide Rises, The Tide Falls," write a multi-paragraph essay analyzing the author's use of poetic devices such as figurative language and imagery to convey his theme. Use specific details and examples from the poem to support your interpretation.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Reading Literature Standard 4 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

The Title in *A Doll's House* (pilot)

The title of a play might be the first words the reader sees, but the important meanings of the title might not be clear until the last scene of the work. By the end of *A Doll's House*, readers (or viewers) should have come to a fuller understanding of the themes or ideas suggested in the title.

Show how the characters and events of the play, especially in the final scene, give the reader (or viewer) a fuller understanding of the themes or ideas suggested in the title. Do not summarize the plot. Instead, explain how the characters and events of the play reveal the meanings of the title.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

The Use of Fantasy in *The Sword in the Stone* (pilot)

The story *The Sword in the Stone* recounts the legend of King Arthur. Legends often combine a historic event with elements of fantasy. Write a well-developed essay explaining how fantasy is used to make the story of how Arthur became king more remarkable than a simple description of the story would. Include examples of fantasy used in the story, as well as other details from the text to support your interpretation.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Reading Literature Standard 4 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

The Use of Parody in *Don Quixote* (pilot)

A parody is a comical piece of writing that mocks a specific literary form. The novel *Don Quixote* by Miguel de Cervantes is a parody of stories about the age of chivalry and the heroic tales of knights. In a well-developed essay, describe how Cervantes uses literary techniques such as exaggerated tone, language, and description to create a parody of these epic adventures. Support your answer using examples and details from the text.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

The Use of Peripety in Homer's *Illiad* (pilot)

A "peripety" is a literary device which presents a character with a dramatic reversal of fortune. Typically, a protagonist faces a sudden change of circumstances, realizing perhaps that s/he has been pursuing a lie or has been deceived by others, and is forced to recognize and adapt to these new circumstances.

In Homer's *Illiad*, Hector and Achilles experience peripeties that change their individual fates as well as the course of the Trojan War itself. In a detailed essay describe the peripety that either Achilles or Hector must face. How does this dramatic revelation affect him and the other characters in the story? Be sure to support your interpretation with references to the text.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Reading Informational Standard 5 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

The Use of Satire by Swift and Burn (pilot)

Read the essay "A Modest Proposal" by Jonathan Swift, and the article "From Cradle to Crockpot" by Claire Winton Burn. In these works, Swift and Burn use satire to expose and/or criticize eighteenth-century Irish society (Swift) and the modern taste for young animals (Burn).

After reading the Swift essay and Burn article, write a detailed essay that explains how Jonathan Swift and Claire Winton Burn effectively use satire to expose and/or criticize eighteenth-century Irish society (Swift) and the modern taste for young animals (Burn). Be sure to use evidence from the texts to support your explanations.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Reading Literature Standard 2 – Grades 9-10

Theme in *Winesburg, Ohio* (pilot)

Three common themes are found in great literature:

1) Each of us is alone (often feeling small or frightened) in the world.

- 2) Evil exists in the hearts of men and women.
- 3) Fear, jealousy, and greed are destructive emotions.

In a multi-paragraph essay, discuss one of the three themes listed above as it applies to Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio*. Be sure to use specific examples from the novel to support your discussion.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Reading Literature Standard 4 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Tone and Mood in "Jabberwocky" (pilot)

Though the poem "Jabberwocky" is created out of made-up words, the reader can still interpret the tone and feeling of the poem. How would you describe the overall mood of "Jabberwocky"? Write a multi-paragraph essay analyzing the tone and mood of the poem. Be sure to include examples from the poem to support your interpretation.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

***Tuesdays with Morrie* by Mitch Albom (pilot)**

Tuesdays with Morrie is a critically acclaimed book in which a college professor, who is suffering from a terminal illness, imparts important life lessons to his "pupil" as one of his final acts. What do you think is Morrie's most important lesson?

Write a multi-paragraph essay in which you discuss what you think is the most important lesson in the book. How could this bit of wisdom impact how you live your life? Be sure to support your response with details from the book.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Reading Literature Standard 5 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Use of Flashback in Nicholas Sparks's *The Notebook* (pilot)

The Notebook, by Nicholas Sparks, focuses on the love story of an elderly couple. Through the use of flashback, the author shifts the story to the 1930s to describe how the couple met, fell in love, and experienced various obstacles throughout the course of their relationship. The author shifts back and forth between the past and the present day throughout the story. What effect does the shift in time achieve? Do you think this enhances the book or takes away from it? How would the book be different without the use of flashback?

In a well-developed essay, critique the author's use of flashback in the novel, discussing the effect it achieves in the story. Include examples from the text to support your critique.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Reading Literature Standard 6 – Grades 11-12

Use of Satire, Sarcasm, Irony, and Understatement (pilot)

Many times in a text, dialogue is provided where the underlying meaning of what a character says varies from what is directly stated. Satire, sarcasm, irony, and understatement are examples of literary devices in which what is directly stated by characters is actually quite different from what is really meant.

In a well-developed essay, discuss the use of satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement in a specific literary work while providing examples from the text to support your response.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Warnings of Dystopia in *The Hunger Games* (pilot)

A dystopia is defined as a repressive, squalid society, the opposite of a utopia. Dystopian novels such as *1984* and *Brave New World* have served as cautionary tales, warning our own society against practices that could lead to the oppressed states they depict. As a dystopian novel, what warnings do you think *The Hunger Games* has for our society? What facets of society in *The Hunger Games* could the book be cautioning us about?

In a detailed essay, discuss the warnings *The Hunger Games* has for our society. Include specific examples and aspects of society from the text to support your thesis.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Writing Through a Critical Lens: Insight (pilot)

Critical Lens:

"Every work of literature leads up to one great moment of insight, one instant in which the truth stands revealed." - T. Melos

Write a multi-paragraph essay in which you analyze one or more literary texts that you have read from the perspective of the critical lens. Be sure to interpret the statement with regards to the literature, as well as agree or disagree with the statement as you have interpreted it. Support your position with specific details and references to literary devices (theme, characterization, setting, point of view) as found in the literature you have selected.

Reading Literature Standard 1 – Grades 9-10, 11-12

Writing Through a Critical Lens: Survival (pilot)

Critical Lens:

"It is not necessary to change. Survival is not mandatory." - W. E. Deming

Write a multi-paragraph essay in which you analyze one or more literary texts that you have read from the perspective of the critical lens. Be sure to interpret the statement with regards to the literature, as well as agree or disagree with the statement as you have interpreted it. Support your position with specific details and references to literary devices (theme, characterization, setting, point of view) as found in the literature you have selected.