

Middle School (6-8) Literary Writing Prompts

IMPORTANT NOTICE TO MY ACCESS!® USERS

THIS MATERIAL IS COPYRIGHTED, PROPRIETARY AND PROTECTED INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY. ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED HEREIN BELONGS EXCLUSIVELY TO VANTAGE LABORATORIES L.L.C., VANTAGE TECHNOLOGIES KNOWLEDGE ASSESSMENT, L.L.C. D/B/A VANTAGE LEARNING AND/OR SUBSIDIARIES AND AFFILIATES OF THE ABOVE ("VANTAGE"). DISCLOSURE, DISSEMINATION OR DUPLICATION OF THIS MATERIAL IS STRICTLY FORBIDDEN WITHOUT THE EXPRESS PRIOR WRITTEN AUTHORIZATION OF VANTAGE. SUBJECT TO YOUR PURCHASE OF A VALID MY ACCESS!® END-USER LICENSE AND YOUR ASSENT TO THE TERMS OF USE OUTLINED THEREWITH, YOU MAY PRINT OR DUPLICATE ONE (1) COPY OF THIS MATERIAL EXCLUSIVELY FOR YOUR PERSONAL USE. THIS MATERIAL IS NOT TO BE VIEWED BY OR SHARED WITH OTHERS, INCLUDING EMPLOYEES, CONSULTANTS, CLIENTS OR OTHER INDIVIDUALS OR ENTITIES THAT ARE NOT SUBJECT TO VANTAGE'S NON-DISCLOSURE AND NON-COMPETITION AGREEMENT. THIS MATERIAL IS SUBJECT TO IMMEDIATE RETURN TO VANTAGE UPON DEMAND NOTWITHSTANDING ANY AGREEMENT TO THE CONTRARY. DELAYS WITH RESPECT TO IMMEDIATE ENFORCEMENT OF ANY PROVISION OF THIS NOTICE SHALL NOT BE DEEMED A WAIVER OF OR TO LIMIT ANY LEGAL OR EQUITABLE REMEDIES APPURTENANT HERETO. IF THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN EXPOSED TO YOU WITHOUT THE AUTHORIZATION DESCRIBED ABOVE, YOU ARE TO REPORT THE EVENT TO VANTAGE IMMEDIATELY BY EMAILING SUPPORT@VANTAGE.COM. VIOLATIONS OF THIS NOTICE SHALL BE STRICTLY ENFORCED BY ANY AND ALL LEGAL AND EQUITABLE MEANS AVAILABLE.

Middle School (6-8) Literary Writing Prompts

Table of Contents

IntelliMetric® Prompts.....	7
A Realistic View of an Important Historic Event.....	7
“A Rice Sandwich”.....	7
“Abuelito Who” by Sandra Cisneros.....	7
“After Twenty Years” by O. Henry.....	7
“All Summer in a Day” by Ray Bradbury.....	8
Analysis of a Literary Character.....	8
Analysis of an Author’s Style.....	8
Analysis of Characters in <i>Bud, Not Buddy</i>	8
“Annabel Lee” by Edgar Allan Poe.....	9
Beyond the Story’s Ending in “The Necklace”.....	9
Characters Respond to Challenges Differently.....	9
Choices Made in <i>Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry</i>	10
Comparing Visions of America.....	10
Conflict in the Secret Annex.....	10
“Echo and Narcissus”.....	10
Edgar Allan Poe Creates Atmosphere.....	11
“Eleven” by Sandra Cisneros.....	11
Father/Son Relationships in Elie Wiesel’s <i>Night</i>	11
“Fish Cheeks” by Amy Tan.....	11
Helen Keller’s Teacher.....	12
Human Engineering in “Flowers for Algernon”.....	12
Influence of Gangs on Characters in <i>The Outsiders</i>	12
Interpretation of Maya Angelou’s “from Human Family”.....	13
Interpretation of “Old Snake” by Pat Mora.....	13
“Just a Normal Day ...”.....	13
Legends, Folktales, Myths, and Fables.....	14
Life Lessons in <i>Charlotte Doyle</i>	14
Literary Devices Create Mood in Literature.....	15
“Madam and the Rent Man” by Langston Hughes.....	15
Magical Water in <i>Tuck Everlasting</i>	15
<i>My Brother Sam is Dead</i> by James L. Collier.....	15
“Names/Nombres” by Julia Alvarez.....	16
“Ooka and the Honest Thief”.....	16
Poetic Devices in “Mother to Son” by Langston Hughes.....	16
Poor Decisions in Fairy Tales.....	16
“Rikki-Tikki-Tavi” by Rudyard Kipling.....	17
“Seventh Grade” by Gary Soto.....	17
Survival in <i>The Hatchet</i>	17

Teen Issues in <i>The Outsiders</i> and <i>Miracle's Boys</i>	17
<i>The Adventures of Tom Sawyer</i> by Mark Twain	18
<i>The Call of the Wild</i> by Jack London	18
"The Cremation of Sam McGee" by Robert Service.....	18
<i>The Diary of Anne Frank</i>	18
"The Dinner Party" by Mona Gardner.....	18
The Effect on the Reader of <i>The Outsiders</i>	19
<i>The Giver</i> by Lois Lowry	19
"The Highwayman" by Alfred Noyes.....	19
"The Lady or the Tiger?" by Frank R. Stockton.....	20
The Significance of the Title in <i>The Call of the Wild</i>	20
Theme in Literature	20
Theme in Two Poems	20
<i>The Mighty</i> by Rodman Philbrick.....	21
"The Monsters are Due on Maple Street".....	21
The Most Influential Spirit in <i>A Christmas Carol</i>	21
"The Smallest Dragonboy" by Anne McCaffrey.....	21
"The Tree"	22
Transformation of Kino in <i>The Pearl</i>	22
Using Characters to Reveal Theme in a Story.....	23
Pilot Prompts	24
<i>A Child Called "It": Letter from a Teacher</i> (pilot)	24
"A Different Kind of Winner" (pilot)	24
A Fractured Future in the <i>Uglies</i> Book Series (pilot).....	25
A Friend in Need (pilot)	26
<i>A Gathering of Days</i> by Joan W. Blos (pilot).....	26
<i>A Girl Named Disaster</i> by Nancy Farmer (pilot)	26
A Mirror's Effect on Self-Acceptance (pilot)	26
<i>Amistad Rising</i> by Veronica Chambers (pilot)	27
Analysis of "Genius" by Nikki Grimes (pilot).....	27
Analysis of <i>The Tale of the Mandarin Ducks</i> (pilot).....	27
<i>Ashes of Roses</i> by Mary Jane Auch (pilot)	27
<i>A Wizard of Earthsea</i> by Ursula K. Le Guin (pilot)	28
<i>A Wrinkle in Time</i> by Madeleine L'Engle (pilot).....	28
<i>Beyond The Divide</i> by Kathryn Lasky (pilot).....	28
Big City or Small Town (pilot).....	28
"Call to Freedom, Beginnings to 1914" by Jonathan Nickerson (pilot).....	28
Change in Genre (pilot)	29
Changes in the Character of the Grinch (pilot).....	29
Characters' Dreams in <i>The Glory Field</i> (pilot)	29
Clique Behavior in The <i>Clique</i> Book Series (pilot).....	29
"Colony in the Sky" by Kim Stanley Robinson (pilot).....	30
Common Characteristics of Greek Myths (pilot)	30
Compare/Contrast <i>Lord of the Flies</i> Novel and Film (pilot)	30
Compare Other Stories of Greed to <i>The Pearl</i> (pilot)	30
Conflict in <i>Twilight</i> by Stephenie Meyer (pilot).....	31

Connections with "The Lion and the Three Bulls" (pilot).....	31
Critique of <i>The Outsiders</i> (pilot)	31
<i>Dar and the Spear-Thrower</i> by Marjorie Cowley (pilot)	31
<i>Day of the Butterfly</i> by Alice Munro (pilot)	32
<i>Death on the Nile</i> (pilot).....	32
Development of a Theme in a Literary Work (pilot).....	32
<i>Dacey's Song</i> by Cynthia Voigt (pilot).....	32
<i>Dinosaur Parents, Dinosaur Young</i> by Kathleen Weidner Zoehfeld (pilot).....	33
Dramatic Production of a Literary Work (pilot).....	33
Effective Habits of Successful Teens (pilot)	33
Effect of Choice of Narrator in <i>Stargirl</i> (pilot)	33
<i>Eleanor Roosevelt: A Life of Discovery</i> by Russell Freedman (pilot).....	34
"End of the Game" by Julio Cortazar (pilot).....	34
"Everybody is Different, but the Same Too" by Nilou (pilot).....	34
"False Expectations" (pilot).....	35
Figurative Language in <i>The Pearl</i> (pilot)	36
<i>Flour Babies</i> by Anne Fine (pilot).....	37
Form Contributes to Meaning (pilot).....	37
"Going Overboard" (pilot).....	37
Guilty or Not Guilty in "Bargain" (pilot).....	38
"Harrison Bergeron" by Kurt Vonnegut (pilot)	39
Heroes in <i>The Outsiders</i> (pilot)	39
<i>Holes</i> by Louis Sachar (pilot).....	39
"Home" in <i>Maniac Magee</i> (pilot)	39
Homesick: <i>My Own Story</i> by Jean Fritz (pilot)	40
<i>Hoops</i> by Walter Dean Myers (pilot)	40
Hope in a Hopeless Situation (pilot).....	40
"How Odin Lost His Eye" by Catherine F. Sellew (pilot).....	40
Humor in A Series of Unfortunate Events (pilot).....	41
<i>Ida B. Wells: Mother of the Civil Rights Movement</i> (pilot).....	41
"I Just Kept on Smiling" by Simon Burt (pilot)	41
Injustice in Literature (pilot).....	41
Insights from the title of <i>Walk Two Moons</i> (pilot)	42
Interference by Puck and Oberon (pilot)	42
<i>Island of the Blue Dolphins</i> by Scott O'Dell (pilot).....	42
<i>Julie of the Wolves</i> by Jean Craighead George (pilot).....	42
Kira's Decision in <i>Gathering Blue</i> by Lois Lowry (pilot)	43
Lessons Learned in <i>The Phantom Tollbooth</i> (pilot)	43
<i>Lincoln: A Photobiography</i> by Russell Freedman (pilot).....	43
Literary Elements in Horror Fiction (pilot)	43
<i>Long Walk to Freedom</i> by Nelson Mandela (pilot)	44
<i>Lord of the Deep</i> by Graham Salisbury (pilot)	44
"Losing Livie" by Karen Hesse (pilot)	44
<i>Lost Temple of the Aztecs</i> by Shelley Tanaka (pilot).....	44
Loyalty in <i>Where the Red Fern Grows</i> (pilot).....	45
Mama Logan and Mother in "Taught Me Purple" (pilot).....	45

<i>Matthew Henson at the Top of the World</i> (pilot).....	45
Maya Angelou's Influences (pilot).....	45
Meaning of "Your World" by Georgia Douglas Johnson (pilot).....	46
Modern-Day Adventures like <i>Treasure Island</i> (pilot).....	46
<i>Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH</i> by Robert C. O'Brien (pilot).....	46
"Ode to an Artichoke" by Pablo Neruda (pilot).....	46
<i>Out of the Dust</i> by Karen Hesse (pilot).....	47
<i>Over Sea, Under Stone</i> by Susan Cooper (pilot).....	47
Ray Bradbury's "The Drummer Boy of Shiloh" (pilot).....	47
Relationships in the Harry Potter Book Series (pilot).....	47
Responding to Malcolm X's Quotation (pilot).....	47
<i>Ribbons</i> by Laurence Yep (pilot).....	48
Roberto Benigni's <i>Life is Beautiful</i> (pilot).....	48
<i>Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry</i> by Mildred D. Taylor (pilot).....	48
<i>Shipwreck at the Bottom of the World</i> by Jennifer Armstrong (pilot).....	48
<i>Sir Walter Raleigh and the Quest for El Dorado</i> by Marc Aronson (pilot).....	49
<i>Sitting Bull and His World</i> by Albert Marrin (pilot).....	49
<i>So Far From the Bamboo Grove</i> by Yoko Kawashima Watkins (pilot).....	49
<i>Stealing Home: The Story of Jackie Robinson</i> (pilot).....	49
Structure of Two or More Texts (pilot).....	50
Style in the Poems of E.E. Cummings (pilot).....	50
"Sundiata, Lion King of Mali" by David Wisniewski (pilot).....	50
Survival Themes in <i>Two Old Women</i> (pilot).....	50
"Ta-Na-E-Ka" by Mary Whitebird (pilot).....	51
<i>The Adventures of Sojourner</i> by Susi Trautmann Wunsch (pilot).....	51
<i>The Bone Detectives</i> by Donna M. Jackson (pilot).....	51
"The Brother I Never Had" by Gim George (pilot).....	51
<i>The Cat and the Coffee Drinkers</i> by Max Steele (pilot).....	51
<i>The Chimpanzees I Love: Saving Their World and Ours</i> by Jane Goodall (pilot).....	52
The Effect of Blindness in <i>The Cay</i> (pilot).....	52
"The Enchanted Raisin" by Jacqueline Balcells (pilot).....	52
<i>The Examination</i> by Malcolm Bosse (pilot).....	53
<i>The Gold Cadillac</i> by Mildred D. Taylor (pilot).....	53
<i>The Incredible Journey of Lewis and Clark</i> by Rhoda Blumberg (pilot).....	53
"The King of Mazy May" by Jack London (pilot).....	53
<i>The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe</i> by C.S. Lewis (pilot).....	54
Theme in "Two Kinds" and "An American Story" (pilot).....	54
Theme in "Under the Rice Moon" (pilot).....	54
<i>The Monkey and the Crocodile</i> , a Jataka Tale (pilot).....	55
"The Sand Castle" by Alma Luz Villanueva (pilot).....	55
<i>The Scorpions</i> by Walter Dean Myers (pilot).....	55
<i>The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants</i> (pilot).....	55
"The Third Wish" by Joan Aiken (pilot).....	55
The Thirteenth Labor of Hercules (pilot).....	56
<i>The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle</i> by Avi (pilot).....	56
<i>The View from Saturday</i> by E. L. Konigsburg (pilot).....	56

<i>The Wright Brothers: How They Invented the Airplane</i> by Russell Freedman (pilot)	56
<i>The Zodiacs</i> by Jay Neugeboren (pilot)	57
<i>To Kill a Mockingbird</i> by Harper Lee (pilot)	57
"Too Soon a Woman" by Dorothy M. Johnson (pilot)	57
True Love in <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> (pilot)	57
"Two Kinds" by Amy Tan (pilot)	58
Unlikely Friends in <i>Charlotte's Web</i> (pilot)	58
Virtue in <i>Black Beauty</i> (pilot)	58
<i>Walk Two Moons</i> by Sharon Creech (pilot)	58
<i>Watership Down</i> by Richard Adams (pilot)	59
"What's Really in a Name?" by Joan Burditt (pilot)	59
<i>Woodsong</i> by Gary Paulsen (pilot)	59
"Young Arthur" by Robert D. San Souci (pilot)	59
"Zebra" by Chaim Potok (pilot)	60
"Zoo Island" by Tomas Rivera (pilot)	60

IntelliMetric® Prompts

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 9 – Grade 7

A Realistic View of an Important Historic Event

In *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963*, the author tells the story of a family from Flint, Michigan, to show how the events of an important time in history affected real people. Which scenes or story elements from the book help the author succeed in bringing these historic events to life?

In a well-developed essay, discuss the elements of the story that give the historic events a realistic quality. Include facts and details to support your discussion.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 6 – Grade 6

“A Rice Sandwich”

Describe the personality characteristics Esperanza shows of herself throughout her first-person narrative. Explain how she shows these qualities in this story. Be sure to include examples to support your claims about Esperanza's personality.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 2 – Grades 6-8

“Abuelito Who” by Sandra Cisneros

In the poem "Abuelito Who," Cisneros describes a grandpa who has changed over the years.

Write a multi-paragraph essay in which you demonstrate your understanding of the poem and the author's message. Be sure to use specific details and examples from the text to support your response.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 2 – Grades 6-8

“After Twenty Years” by O. Henry

In the story "After Twenty Years" by O. Henry, two friends are about to reunite at the same place they parted twenty years before.

After carefully reading "After Twenty Years," write a multi-paragraph essay analyzing the author's message. Be sure to use specific details and examples from the text to support your response.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 3 – Grades 6-8

"All Summer in a Day" by Ray Bradbury

In the story "All Summer in a Day" by Ray Bradbury, Margot's classmates are jealous of her because she has experienced the warmth of the sun.

After carefully reading the story, write a multi-paragraph essay in which you analyze how Margot's classmates' experience with the sun has changed them. Be sure to use specific details and examples from the text to support your response.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Analysis of a Literary Character

We understand characters in literature by paying attention to what they say, what they do, and how other characters react to them. The author of a novel will help us understand a character by describing how that character reacts in certain situations. Select a character from a novel you have read in class and analyze that character's personality. What adjectives would you choose to describe the character? What information and evidence from the novel supports the use of those adjectives?

In a multi-paragraph essay, use adjectives to analyze a character from one of the novels you have read in class. Use quotations, details, and examples from the novel to support your selection of adjectives.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 3 – Grades 6-8

Analysis of an Author's Style

An author's style describes his/her particular use of language in telling a story. For example, an author may use mostly short or long sentences or a combination of both. An author also may rely mostly on dialogue or just include a small amount of dialogue in a story. In short, an author generally uses a style that best fits the story he/she is telling, as well as the particular setting of the literary work.

In a detailed essay, choose a particular literary work (i.e., novel, short story, poem), and describe the author's use of style within that work. You might want to include how the author's style suits the subject matter and setting and how it contributes to the overall effect of the piece.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 2 – Grades 6-8

Analysis of Characters in *Bud, Not Buddy*

In *Bud, Not Buddy* by Christopher Paul Curtis, Bud is trying to unravel the mystery surrounding his mother and her long-lost family in order to discover where he fits in. He follows clues gathered after

his mother's death, which led him to Herman E. Calloway, a famous jazz musician. A very important clue he discovers is that both he and Mr. Calloway have an interesting rock collection.

In a multi-paragraph essay, describe the character(s) in the book and the overall meaning of Bud's discovery. Include details and examples from the text to support your ideas.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 2 – Grades 6-8

"Annabel Lee" by Edgar Allan Poe

The poem "Annabel Lee" describes the love Edgar Allan Poe had for his young bride after she passed away.

After carefully reading "Annabel Lee," write a multi-paragraph essay analyzing the author's purpose in writing this poem. Be sure to use specific details and examples from the text to support your response.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Beyond the Story's Ending in "The Necklace"

In the story, the main character, Mathilde Loisel, borrows what she thinks is a very expensive diamond necklace from her friend, Madame Jeanne Forestier. Mathilde loses the necklace and soon finds that her life is shaped by her decision to not tell the truth about the loss. The story ends with Mathilde's discovery that the necklace she had borrowed was not the expensive real diamond necklace that she thought it was. What do you think happened in Mathilde's life after that discovery?

In a multi-paragraph essay, discuss what you think happened to Mathilde after she discovered that the necklace she originally borrowed and lost was made of fake diamonds. Use details from the story to support your discussion.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 6 – Grade 7

Characters Respond to Challenges Differently

Characters respond to challenges differently based upon the circumstances and their own personal motivations, strengths, and weaknesses. Consider two different characters from a story (or stories) you have read. What challenges did these characters face? How did they respond to these challenges?

In a well-developed essay, compare and contrast how these two characters responded to the challenges they faced. Make sure to include specific details and examples from the text(s) to support your interpretation.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 3 – Grades 6-8

Choices Made in *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*

Mildred D. Taylor's *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* is considered a rite of passage novel. It traces the social development, growth, and maturity of its main characters: Cassie, Stacey, and T.J. Each character has specific personality traits and makes choices that send him or her down the "road" of life.

Compose a multi-paragraph essay in which you analyze the lessons that Cassie, Stacey, and T.J. have to learn. Consider the consequences of their value systems, their choices, and how they respond to their experiences.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 4 – Grades 6-8

Comparing Visions of America

In Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address and Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech, each speaker describes his vision of America.

After carefully reading these speeches, write a multi-paragraph essay in which you compare the images of America evoked by these speakers. How are their images similar? How are they different? Be sure to include specific examples and details from the texts to support your analysis.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 3 – Grades 6-8

Conflict in the Secret Annex

The Diary of Anne Frank describes the trials and triumphs of three families, the Franks, Dussels, and VanDaans. In order to save their families, they must stay hidden in the Secret Annex from the Nazis.

Write a multi-paragraph essay in which you explain a major conflict faced by these families and how they resolved it. Be sure to use specific details and examples from the text to support your response.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

"Echo and Narcissus"

The mythical story "Echo and Narcissus" tells of the tragic ending of Echo, who could only speak what she heard due to her excessive talking, and Narcissus, who was cursed because he only loved himself.

Write a multi-paragraph essay in which you defend or refute the punishments that these characters faced. Be sure to include specific details and examples to support your argument.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 3 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 4 – Grades 6-8

Edgar Allan Poe Creates Atmosphere

Edgar Allan Poe's poems and stories are known for the eerie and unsettling feeling they give their readers. In works such as "The Raven," "Annabel Lee," and "The Tell-Tale Heart," Poe effectively creates this spooky and disturbing atmosphere. But how does he do it?

Select one of Edgar Allan Poe's short stories or poems and explain how the author was able to create an eerie atmosphere in this work and how it affected you as a reader. Remember to include the various techniques Poe used such as setting, imagery, and repetition.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 2 – Grades 6-8

"Eleven" by Sandra Cisneros

In the story "Eleven," Cisneros writes, "What they don't understand about birthdays and what they never tell you is that when you're eleven, you're also ten, and nine, and eight, and seven, and six, and five, and four, and three, and two, and one." After carefully reading the story, explain what you feel the author means in this statement. Include examples and details from the text and your own experiences to support your answer.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 2 – Grades 6-8

Father/Son Relationships in Elie Wiesel's *Night*

Night, by Elie Wiesel, tells the story of one man's hardships during the Holocaust. The father/son relationship is one of the prominent themes seen in the novel. Within the text, there are a number of references to father/son relationships, including the protagonist Eliezer's own relationship with his father.

In a detailed essay, discuss the theme of father and son relationships and its function in the novel. Include details and examples from the text to support your discussion.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 2 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 3 – Grades 6-8

"Fish Cheeks" by Amy Tan

In the short story "Fish Cheeks," author Amy Tan writes an emotional story based on a real-life experience. Through her description of one particular Christmas Eve, Amy Tan shares with the reader her thoughts and feelings about being a Chinese-American girl in America.

Write an essay in which you identify, analyze, and discuss Amy Tan's feelings and emotions, both with respect to the events that took place in the story as well as the more general matter of being different than others. In your essay, be sure to also explain the message that Amy Tan is communicating through her story.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Helen Keller's Teacher

Helen Keller was an astonishing person who succeeded in life despite her disabilities. However, it wasn't always easy for her to learn. The person who had the most extraordinary impact on Helen's education was her teacher, Annie Sullivan.

Write a multi-paragraph essay analyzing the character of Annie Sullivan and the impact she had on Helen's life. Make sure to use details and examples to support your analysis.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 3 – Grades 6-8

Human Engineering in “Flowers for Algernon”

In the short story “Flowers for Algernon,” Charlie is the subject of an experiment in human engineering that radically changes his life. As the story progresses, the readers learn of great joys as well as great heartaches that Charlie experiences as a result of this experiment.

In a well-reasoned essay, analyze the impact of Charlie's experience with human engineering. Overall, do you think the experiment was positive or negative for Charlie? Why or why not? Be sure to support your interpretation with specific details from the text.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 3 – Grades 6-8

Influence of Gangs on Characters in *The Outsiders*

After reading *The Outsiders* by S. E. Hinton, choose a character from one of the gangs, and think about how he reacted to his role in the gang. How did the gang influence the decisions he made? Did stereotyping, peer pressure, the role of parents, lack of parents, and societal expectations affect this character's actions?

In a well-developed essay, discuss one or more of the characters from the novel, their role in the gang, and how the gang influenced their decisions. Include specific evidence from the novel to support your discussion.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 2 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 4 – Grades 6-8

Interpretation of Maya Angelou's "from Human Family"

What is the message expressed in the poem "from Human Family" by Maya Angelou? How does the poet feel about diversity? What literary devices are used in the expression of this message?

In a detailed essay, interpret the message that the poet is trying to express in the poem. Include a discussion of specific literary devices used in the poem to express the poem's message.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 2 – Grades 6-8

Interpretation of "Old Snake" by Pat Mora

After reading the poem "Old Snake" by Pat Mora, write a well-developed essay in which you present and explain your interpretation of the overall meaning of the poem. Support your ideas with examples and/or evidence from the poem.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 2 – Grades 6-8

"Just a Normal Day ..."

After carefully reading the story, write a multi-paragraph essay in which you analyze the characters and main idea of the story. Be sure to use specific details and examples from the story to support your response.

Just a Normal Day ...

Soccer practice was really brutal that day. We had lost a huge game the day before, and the coach was really disappointed with the way we had played. He made us do drills and run sprints and basically punished all of us. We practiced in a downpour most of the afternoon, and that made it especially miserable. As I got into my mom's car after practice, I didn't have a clue that I would soon be wishing I could run in the rain again.

"Chad, you look like a drowned rat," Mom exclaimed as I got in the car, expecting me to laugh.

She told me to sit on a towel as I started whining about practice and how unfair it was that the coach worked us so hard. I remember saying that I wish I had sprained an ankle or something in the game so I could have missed practice. Wow, that would be the last time I ever said anything like that again. I remembered watching the rain streaking across the window next to my face, but I have no memory at all of what happened next.

Loads of slick, wet leaves covered the road, and as we rounded a sharp left-hand turn, the man in the other lane lost control of his car. I guess we were lucky that he was driving a compact. Anyway, that car slammed into the driver's side of our car and spun us around so we ended up in the ditch off the right side of the road. Our car knocked over a signpost and a stone wall before it stopped. We skidded past a huge oak tree by about a foot, so I guess that was lucky, too.

I regained consciousness in the ambulance. My left leg hurt so much I couldn't believe it! I was terrified and kept whimpering, "Where's Mom, where's Mom?" The paramedic told me that Mom was all right and was riding in another vehicle. Tears were streaming down my face, and I couldn't figure out what had happened. I was strapped down so I couldn't move. I don't know if I was talking out loud or not. It was like waking up in a horrible nightmare, except that my leg was burning with pain. I guess I passed out again because the next thing I remember is waking up in the hospital.

When I opened my eyes the next day, my dad was sprawled in a chair next to my bed with his head back, snoring. I started to laugh, but a stab of pain in my left side made me catch my breath. He woke up and told me what happened and that my mother was okay and would be discharged that day. He explained that I was pretty banged up. I had a spiral fracture in my left femur and three broken ribs on my left side. I also got a concussion, which explains why I blacked out twice. Later, the policeman who had been the first to arrive at the scene stopped by my room to visit me. He said that when he initially saw our wrecked car, he didn't think there would be any survivors. Thank goodness I was wearing a seatbelt.

Weeks later, my physical therapist said that if I work hard I might be able to play soccer again next season. I felt really depressed for a while because I couldn't do anything. But then I realized that this accident happened on a normal day in my life, and that day might have been my last. While it was a pretty horrible event, it could have been a lot worse. Since then I have really begun to appreciate many things that I used to take for granted.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 2 – Grades 6-8

Legends, Folktales, Myths, and Fables

Legends, folktales, myths, and fables are stories that often originated as part of a storytelling tradition and are passed down from one generation to the next. These stories are used to teach an important lesson, share an insight about life that is held dear by a particular culture, or explain how the world works.

Think about a legend, folktale, myth, or fable you have read. What do you think is the message of the story? In a well-developed essay, summarize in your own words the details of the story you have read and discuss the lesson or insight that it conveys.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Life Lessons in *Charlotte Doyle*

Charlotte Doyle learns many important "life lessons" from her experiences on the *Seahawk*. Write a multi-paragraph essay in which you discuss some of the important lessons she has learned. How do you think these lessons may affect her future? Be sure to support your discussion with specific examples from the book.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 4 – Grades 6-8

Literary Devices Create Mood in Literature

The mood of a piece of literature is the atmosphere created by the author. A writer may produce a unique mood through the use of literary devices.

Think about a story you have recently read. How did the author use literary devices to create the mood in this story? Write a multi-paragraph essay in which you discuss how the author used literary techniques such as irony, imagery, figurative language, and dialect to create the mood of the story. Be sure to support your position with meaningful references to the story.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 2 – Grades 6-8

"Madam and the Rent Man" by Langston Hughes

In the poem "Madam and the Rent Man," Langston Hughes expresses the frustrations of an unhappy tenant. What message was the author trying to convey?

Write a multi-paragraph essay in which you demonstrate your understanding of the poem and the author's message. Be sure to use specific details and examples from the text to support your response.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Magical Water in *Tuck Everlasting*

Members of the Tuck family are divided in their opinions on being able to live forever. Jesse would like Winnie to drink from the magical spring and live forever with him at the age of seventeen. Jesse's father, Angus, warns Winnie that living forever is not a perfect life. If you were Winnie, how would you have made your choice about drinking the magical water?

In a well-developed essay, discuss how you would have made your decision on whether or not to drink the magical water from the spring. Include details from the story to support your choice.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

***My Brother Sam is Dead* by James L. Collier**

Imagine that you were a character in *My Brother Sam is Dead*. You have witnessed many of the monumental events that took place in the novel.

Write a letter to a friend in which you describe one of these major events. Be sure to include specific details from the text to support your response.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 2 – Grades 6-8

"Names/Nombres" by Julia Alvarez

In "Names/Nombres," Julia Alvarez describes the various names she received while growing up.

After carefully reading the story, write a multi-paragraph essay analyzing the main idea of the story. Be sure to use specific details and examples from the text to support your response.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

"Ooka and the Honest Thief"

The Japanese folktale "Ooka and the Honest Thief" asks us to question what it really means to be an honest person.

After carefully reading the folktale, who do you believe is the most honest character and why? In a well-developed essay, state the character you have selected and why you feel this character is the most honest. Be sure to include specific details to support your response.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 4 – Grades 6-8

Poetic Devices in "Mother to Son" by Langston Hughes

In the poem "Mother to Son," a mother is telling her child about her difficult life experiences. After carefully reading "Mother to Son," write a multi-paragraph essay analyzing the author's use of poetic devices such as imagery and figurative language to convey his theme. Use specific details and examples from the poem to support your interpretation.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 2 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 3 – Grades 6-8

Poor Decisions in Fairy Tales

Many of the most famous fairy tales are filled with characters who made poor decisions which led to the conflict in the story. Little Red Riding Hood unwisely spoke to the wolf on her way to her grandmother's house, for instance, while Goldilocks boldly entered the bears' house uninvited. Many more examples such as these abound in the fairy tales we enjoy.

Think about a familiar fairy tale. Write an essay in which you describe a poor decision made by one of the characters and how this decision led to the conflict in the story. What messages are the readers supposed to learn from this poor decision? Be sure to include specific details and examples to support your analysis.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8
"Rikki-Tikki-Tavi" by Rudyard Kipling

The short story "Rikki-Tikki-Tavi" tells about Rikki's life with the family that rescued him and his subsequent challenges in the garden.

Write a multi-paragraph essay in which you describe the main conflict in this story. Be sure to use details from the story to make your description more vivid for the reader.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8
Literature Standard 3 – Grades 6-8
"Seventh Grade" by Gary Soto

Gary Soto's story "Seventh Grade" entertains the reader with the common experience of a boy's embarrassment while trying to impress a girl.

After carefully reading the story, write a multi-paragraph essay analyzing the consequences of Victor's actions and what you would have done if you were in his shoes. Be sure to use specific details and examples from the text to support your response.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8
Literature Standard 3 – Grades 6-8
Survival in *The Hatchet*

Brian Robeson, the main character in the novel *The Hatchet*, survives a plane crash and finds himself alone in the wilderness. What skills, talents, and personality traits contribute to Brian's survival? In what ways could he have benefited from having additional survival skills or talents?

In a multi-paragraph essay, discuss Brian's ability to survive in the wilderness. Include facts, details, and examples from the story to support your discussion.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8
Teen Issues in *The Outsiders* and *Miracle's Boys*

In some adolescent novels, such as *The Outsiders* and *Miracle's Boys*, characters battle important and difficult teenage social issues, such as gang violence, friendship, or poverty.

After carefully reading *The Outsiders* or *Miracle's Boys*, select a character in the story who encountered an important teen issue. In a well-developed essay, explore how this character dealt with this issue and how it was finally resolved. Be sure to include details and examples from the text to support your analysis.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

***The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* by Mark Twain**

How do you think a newspaper reporter might have reported on the events in this story? Choose one of the important events in the story and write a news article about it. Tell who, what, when, where, and why in your article, and give it an appropriate headline.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

***The Call of the Wild* by Jack London**

Suppose you are a newspaper reporter covering the nineteenth-century gold rush in Alaska. You have seen Buck pulling the sled for John Thornton, and you have heard many stories told about the famous dog.

Write a news article about Buck. Tell where he came from, describe some of the remarkable things he did, and tell what happened to him in the end.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 2 – Grades 6-8

"The Cremation of Sam McGee" by Robert Service

After reading the poem "The Cremation of Sam McGee" by Robert Service, write an essay in which you analyze the author's message. Be sure to include details from the poem to support your response.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 2 – Grades 6-8

The Diary of Anne Frank

The play *The Diary of Anne Frank* ends with the statement, "In spite of everything, I still believe that people are really good at heart."

Why might Anne have felt this way after her ordeal? What does this reveal about her character and her views about life? In a well-reasoned essay, discuss why you think Anne made this statement. Be sure to include details and examples in your explanation.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 2 – Grades 6-8

"The Dinner Party" by Mona Gardner

"The Dinner Party" by Mona Gardner explores the typical stereotyping that takes place regarding the emotions of women and men.

After carefully reading the selection "The Dinner Party," write a multi-paragraph essay demonstrating your understanding of the author's message. Be sure to use specific examples from the text to support your response.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 2 – Grades 6-8

The Effect on the Reader of *The Outsiders*

In *The Outsiders*, several other literary works are mentioned. Robert Frost's poem, "Nothing Gold Can Stay," gives a rather pessimistic view of life, suggesting that the best experiences can't last for long. *Gone With the Wind*, a novel set at the time of the Civil War, is the book Ponyboy reads to Johnny when they are hiding in the church. At the end of *The Outsiders*, Johnny writes a note and puts it in the novel, where he knows Ponyboy will find it. Johnny's message to Ponyboy is optimistic or hopeful: "There's still lots of good in the world."

Do you believe the overall effect of this book on a reader is optimistic (hopeful) or pessimistic? Write an essay in which you convince your audience of your position on this issue. Consider the characters and events as well as the poem and war novel. Support your opinion with specific references to the book. Do not simply retell the story.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

***The Giver* by Lois Lowry**

After experiencing the feeling of love from the Giver and his memories, Jonas thought about the way life must have been when there was love and realized it was probably a "dangerous way to live." Think about what Jonas meant. What was "dangerous" about that kind of life, and what was a "safe" life like? What were the advantages and disadvantages of each choice?

Write an essay in which you either support or criticize Jonas's decision to escape the community in light of the choice he made between a safe life and a dangerous one.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 2 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 4 – Grades 6-8

"The Highwayman" by Alfred Noyes

After studying Alfred Noyes's poem, "The Highwayman," write an essay in which you analyze the author's message. Focus your writing on several clear images from the poem and be sure to discuss how the characters' actions and the poet's language reveal the author's message.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 2 – Grades 6-8

"The Lady or the Tiger?" by Frank R. Stockton

The story "The Lady or the Tiger?" leaves readers surprised and astonished by its vague ending. However, in addition to its intriguing conclusion, the story itself incorporates a very interesting and important lesson.

After carefully reading the story, write a multi-paragraph essay demonstrating your understanding of the story's message. Be sure to use specific details and examples from the text to support your response.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

The Significance of the Title in *The Call of the Wild*

The Call of the Wild by Jack London is an adventurous narrative told from a dog's point of view. After reading *The Call of the Wild*, write a multi-paragraph essay analyzing the significance of the title of the story. Why do you think the author decided to use the title, *The Call of the Wild*? Use specific examples and details from the text in your explanation.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 2 – Grades 6-8

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.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 2 – Grades 6-8

Theme in Two Poems

Select two poems that we have read in class. Think about the themes expressed through the main ideas, key details, and language of each poem. Are there similar or opposing themes? Does each poet use similar styles and devices to convey the theme?

In a detailed essay, compare and contrast the themes of two poems. Include details on the overall message as well as how theme is developed through the story elements, main ideas, and figurative language. Use quotations from the poems to support your analysis.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8
Literature Standard 3 – Grades 6-8
***The Mighty* by Rodman Philbrick**

In the book *The Mighty*, Kevin and Max are very close friends. In a well-developed essay, explain how Max changes as a result of knowing Kevin. Support your analysis with details from the text.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8
Literature Standard 2 – Grades 6-8
“The Monsters are Due on Maple Street”

In Scene Two of Rod Serling's television drama, “The Monsters are Due on Maple Street,” Figure One says, “Their world is full of Maple Streets. And we'll go from one to the other and let them destroy themselves. One to the other ... one to the other ... one to the other.”

What did Figure One mean? What are your thoughts about Figure One's statement as it applies to the story told? Write an essay in which you explain the meaning of Figure One's statement and discuss your opinion about it. Be sure to support your explanation with examples and evidence from the drama.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8
The Most Influential Spirit in *A Christmas Carol*

In the story, Ebenezer Scrooge is visited by the spirits of Christmas past, present, and future on Christmas Eve. Each spirit leads Scrooge to view one of three different times in his life in order to teach him a lesson. The spirits are determined to convince Scrooge to start being more compassionate and less miserly. Which spirit's message do you think had the greatest impact on Scrooge? In a multi-paragraph essay, explain which Christmas spirit you think had the greatest influence on Scrooge. Include details and examples from the story to support your discussion.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8
"The Smallest Dragonboy" by Anne McCaffrey

In the story "The Smallest Dragonboy," the main character, Keevan, overcomes his many conflicts to become the story's hero.

Write a multi-paragraph essay in which you describe Keevan's many character traits and how he uses these to become the heroic figure of the story. Be sure to use specific examples from the text to support your response.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8***“The Tree”**

Read the passage by Sarah Orne Jewett.

Why would a young girl climb such a huge tree? Why was the climb so difficult? Write a well-organized essay in which you answer these questions.

The Tree
by Sarah Orne Jewett

There was the huge tree asleep yet in the paling moonlight, and small and hopeful Sylvia began with utmost bravery to mount to the top of it, with tingling, eager blood coursing the channels of her whole frame, with her bare feet and fingers that pinched and held like a bird's claws to the monstrous ladder reaching up, up, almost to the sky itself. First she must mount the white oak tree that grew alongside, where she was almost lost among the dark branches and the green leaves heavy and wet with dew; a bird fluttered off its nest, and a red squirrel ran to and fro and scolded pettishly at the harmless housebreaker. Sylvia felt her way easily. She had often climbed there and knew that higher still one of the oak's upper branches chafed against the pine trunk, just where its lower boughs were set close together. There, when she made the dangerous pass from one tree to the other, the great enterprise would really begin.

She crept out along the swaying oak limb at last and took the daring step across into the old pine tree. The way was harder than she thought; she must reach far and hold fast. The sharp dry twigs caught and held her and scratched her like angry talons; the pitch made her thin little fingers clumsy and stiff as she went round and round the great tree's stem, higher and higher upward. The sparrows and robins in the woods below were beginning to wake and twitter to the dawn, yet it seemed much lighter there aloft in the pine tree and the child knew that she must hurry if her project were to be of any use.

The tree seemed to lengthen itself out as she went up and to reach farther and farther upward. It was like a great mainmast to the voyaging earth; it must truly have been amazed that morning through all its ponderous frame as it felt this determined spark of human spirit creeping and climbing from higher branch to branch. Who knows how steadily the last twigs held themselves to advantage this light, weak creature on her way! The old pine must have loved this new dependant. More than all the hawks and bats and moths and even the sweet-voiced thrushes was the brave, beating heart of the solitary gray-eyed child. And the tree stood still and held away the winds that June morning while the dawn grew bright in the east.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8**Literature Standard 3 – Grades 6-8***Transformation of Kino in *The Pearl***

Most characters experience significant transformation throughout the course of a story. Sometimes characters change for the better, and sometimes they change for the worse. How do you think Kino changed throughout the novel *The Pearl*? Did his character make positive or negative changes?

In a multi-paragraph essay, describe Kino’s “change over time” in the novel *The Pearl*. Be sure to use examples from the text, including quotes, to support your description.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 2 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 3 – Grades 6-8

Using Characters to Reveal Theme in a Story

An author may create characters in a short story or novel who reveal the story’s message or theme. Think about a novel or short story you have recently read. How is the development of the characters important to the message or theme of the story? How do the characters in the story reveal that message or theme?

In a well-developed essay, discuss how your selected characters develop and/or change throughout the story and how they reveal the overall meaning or theme. Use facts, details, and examples from the story to support your discussion.

Pilot Prompts

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

A Child Called "It": Letter from a Teacher (pilot)

A Child Called "It", by Dave Pelzer, is Pelzer's autobiography of the years of abuse he endured as a child 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.

Writing as one of the teachers who saved Pelzer, write a letter to him about an award the teachers are giving him for his bravery and courage. Show your understanding of his situation by using details and examples from the book.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 2 – Grades 6-8

"A Different Kind of Winner" (pilot)

Carefully read "A Different Kind of Winner." Study the two lessons below:

- * Be true to yourself.
- * Success comes in many shapes and sizes.

Write a multi-paragraph essay in which you tell which lesson better fits the story "A Different Kind of Winner." Use details from the story to support your answer.

A Different Kind of Winner

"Come on, Bob! You didn't sign up for soccer or basketball. You said you didn't get into football. Now, you don't even want to do track? What's wrong with you?"

Bob was totally preoccupied, fiddling with the shutter release on his camera. "Nothing is wrong with me, Danny. I just don't want to spend my time running around in circles every day after school. There's more to life than sports, you know!"

It was obvious that Bob was not going to be persuaded to join the team and that, at the moment; he wasn't even interested in making conversation. Danny began dribbling his basketball, and in no time, most of the guys were shooting baskets with him on the court nearby.

Eugene, Bob's best friend, plopped himself down at the picnic table and swung his feet onto the bench.

"Hey! Stop jiggling the table!" Bob objected. "I've almost got this thing fixed."

"You ought to give it a try!" Eugene ventured.

Bob snapped a little gizmo into place and looked up, confused. "Give what a try?"

"What all the guys have been talking about," Eugene said, "Track. Why don't you join the team? Running is good exercise. It's good for your health, and when you win, it feels great!"

"I'm healthy as a horse!" Bob replied. "Hey! I have to get down to Bernie's Photo Shop before he closes. Do you want to come?"

"No. Thanks for inviting me, but I think I'll shoot a few baskets with the guys instead!"

He wondered what it would be like to run with the guys instead of sitting on the steps alone. Bob forced doubts from his mind.

Mr. Bennett, the yearbook club advisor, had scheduled a big meeting for Saturday afternoon. As requested, Bob prepared a list of photographs he felt should be included in the yearbook. Because Bob left early Saturday morning, allowing enough time to stop at Bernie's, he missed an important phone call. Mr. Bennett had come down with the flu and had to cancel the yearbook meeting. Bob didn't learn of the change until he arrived at the school and read a note posted on Mr. Bennett's door. Bob was disappointed. As he started for home, he realized this was the day of the track and field meet with the Franklin Heights team. It was the most important event of the season because the winning team would qualify for the regional finals.

Bob decided to make the best of a disappointing situation. He wandered down to the track, found a seat on the bleachers, and got his camera ready to take some shots of the competition. Soon as the team from Franklin Heights arrived and before long, the starting whistle blew for the main event.

People in the stands cheered wildly as the race began. As the runners approached the finish line, Danny was locked in a dead-heat - he and another boy were shoulder-to-shoulder. The race was close - very close. "Come on, Danny. You can do it!" Bob shouted. He raised the viewfinder to his eye and focused on the ribbon that marked the finish line. Snap! The ends of the ribbon tore apart as the two runners burst through. But who had crossed the line first?

As Bob pictured in his mind what he had seen through the viewfinder, he noticed the two judges talking near the track. Then came the announcement, "The race is undecided. It will have to be run again." The bleachers erupted with moans and groans of disappointment.

Bob pushed his way past the crowd of unhappy faces and hurried down to the judge's table. "I think I can help identify the winner," he said to one of the judges. "I photographed the finish."

When the judges heard the word photographed, they looked up simultaneously. "How soon can you get your photographs developed?" one of the judges asked.

"If I hurry, I can have them in an hour," Bob said. "Go for it, kid! Your photo could help us reach a decision by the time the hurdle event is over."

Knowing how important Bob's photos were, Bernie rushed the developing process and did a blowup of the important shot. Bob rushed the evidence back to the judges' stand within 45 minutes. The judges studied the photo. Beyond the shadow of a doubt, Danny had broken the ribbon and was the winner! Danny's teammates raised him to their shoulders and marched him around while the audience cheered enthusiastically.

Bob hadn't run a step, but he felt like a winner. Eugene was right. It felt great.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

A Fractured Future in the Uglies Book Series (pilot)

Teenagers are required to undergo surgery to become supermodel beautiful in the Uglies book series in order to maintain their dystopian society. They are labeled as "uglies" until the age of 16, when they are required by the government to become a "pretty." There is also a group of rebels who live outside of government control and choose to remain "uglies." Although it would seem that being undeniably beautiful would be a wonderful way to live, that may not always be the case. If you lived in this futuristic society, would you choose to be one of the rebels or would you become a "pretty"?

In a well-developed essay, discuss whether or not you would choose to be one of the "uglies." Use facts and details from the story to support your discussion.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

A Friend in Need (pilot)

In Sharon Draper's book, *Forged by Fire*, the main characters, Gerald and Angel, live in an abusive environment. Imagine that you are their friend and would like to help them. What could you do to help them cope with their situation?

In a well-developed essay, discuss how you could help Gerald and Angel cope with living in an abusive environment.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

A Gathering of Days by Joan W. Blos (pilot)

Suppose you were one of Catherine's friends who lived nearby and shared many of her experiences. Choose one of the events described in the book and write your own journal entry telling what happened from your point of view and how you felt about it. Include details from the book and try to use the kind of language Catherine used to make your journal entry realistic.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

A Girl Named Disaster by Nancy Farmer (pilot)

On many different occasions, Nhamo told stories to entertain others or to occupy herself. Many of the stories began with "Once upon a time. . ."

Write the story of Nhamo as a tale that happened "Once upon a time." Tell what happened to her on her journey and how her story ended up.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 2 – Grades 6-8

A Mirror's Effect on Self-Acceptance (pilot)

Read the story, "The Cat Who Thought She Was a Dog and the Dog Who Thought He Was a Cat" by Isaac Singer. In the story, the theme of accepting yourself for who you are is challenged by the introduction of a mirror. Marianna, her daughters, even the cat and dog, are affected by the reflections in the mirror.

In a well-developed essay, discuss how the actions of the characters change with the introduction of the mirror. Include details from the story to support your discussion.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8
Literature Standard 2 – Grades 6-8
***Amistad Rising* by Veronica Chambers (pilot)**

In the story *Amistad Rising*, John Cinque and his fellow slaves rebel against their Spanish captors on their quest for freedom.

After carefully reading *Amistad Rising*, write a multi-paragraph summary demonstrating your understanding of the story's message. Be sure to use specific examples from the text to support your response.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8
Literature Standard 2 – Grades 6-8
Analysis of "Genius" by Nikki Grimes (pilot)

After reading the poem "Genius" by Nikki Grimes, analyze the theme, events, and meaning of the poem. What is the poet's message to the reader? What would the poet like the reader to learn from the poem?

In a detailed essay, discuss your understanding of the meaning and events in the poem "Genius" by Nikki Grimes. Include details about the poet's message to the reader and evidence from the text of the poem to support your discussion.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8
Literature Standard 3 – Grades 6-8
Analysis of *The Tale of the Mandarin Ducks* (pilot)

In the story *The Tale of the Mandarin Ducks* by Katherine Paterson, the capture of a mandarin duck begins a series of events involving a lord, a one-eyed servant, and a kitchen maid.

After carefully reading the story, write a multi-paragraph essay in which you analyze how the plot develops as well as how the characters react or change in response to events in the story. Be sure to use specific details and examples from the text to support your response.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8
***Ashes of Roses* by Mary Jane Auch (pilot)**

Imagine that you are Rose Nolan or Maureen after the factory fire. Write a letter to your parents back in Ireland. Tell them what has happened since they left, where you are living, and why you plan to stay in America.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

***A Wizard of Earthsea* by Ursula K. Le Guin (pilot)**

Suppose that you are a mage, and your job is to tell the story of the "Deed of Ged" so it may be passed on to future generations. Write a story that describes who Ged is and what he accomplished. Tell about his achievements up to and including the final confrontation with the shadow.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

***A Wrinkle in Time* by Madeleine L'Engle (pilot)**

Suppose that you are Mr. Murry and you have to write a report about your experiences over the last year. Write a report that tells what you did, where you went, and what happened to you in the past year. Use details from the story to describe how the children arrived and saved you from IT.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

***Beyond The Divide* by Kathryn Lasky (pilot)**

At the end of the story, Meribah gave George Goodnough a sealed letter for Constance Simon in Holly Springs, Pennsylvania. What do you think she wrote in the letter? Writing as Meribah, write a letter to Constance Simon back home. Tell her what you have done since you left, what happened to your father, and what you plan to do now. Use details from the story in your letter.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

***Big City or Small Town* (pilot)**

In *Hope was Here* by Joan Bauer, Hope moves from big city Brooklyn, New York to small town Mulhoney, Wisconsin. Based on Hope's experiences, where do you think you would prefer to live?

In a well-developed essay, discuss whether you would prefer living in a big city or a small town. Include details and examples to support your discussion.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 2 – Grades 6-8

"Call to Freedom, Beginnings to 1914" by Jonathan Nickerson (pilot)

The selection "Call to Freedom, Beginnings to 1914" describes the courageous endeavors of a few teenage soldiers who fought for independence during the Revolutionary War.

After carefully reading the selection "Call to Freedom, Beginnings to 1914" write a multi-paragraph summary describing the author's main idea. Be sure to use specific details and examples from the text to support your response.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8***Change in Genre (pilot)**

Folk tales have been made into ballads, novels into movies, fairy tales into stage dramas or comedies. If you could change a literary work from one genre to another, which literary work would you change and into which genre would you change it?

In a well-developed essay, describe the change of a literary work from one genre to another. Include examples from the work to illustrate the change and your reasons for this change.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8***Changes in the Character of the Grinch (pilot)**

Most main characters go through changes during a story. Sometimes characters change for the better and become happy or nice, and sometimes they change for the worse and become nasty or angry. How do you think the Grinch changed in Dr. Seuss's *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*? Did he change for the better or for the worse?

In a multi-paragraph essay, describe the Grinch's change in the story *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*. Make sure to give examples from the story to show how and why he changed.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8***Characters' Dreams in *The Glory Field* (pilot)**

Characters in literature often dream of a life better than their own. Unfortunately, sometimes obstacles hinder these dreams from coming true.

Select a character from *The Glory Field* and write a multi-paragraph essay describing the dream he or she had, how he or she attempted to realize this dream, and the obstacles the character encountered along the way. Be sure to include specific examples and details from the text to support your analysis.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8***Clique Behavior in *The Clique Book Series* (pilot)**

The *Clique* book series focuses on the lives of a group of teenage girls and their relationships. Current research indicates that teenage girls are capable of physical and verbal cruelty at unexpected levels. What influences the young women in this story to act in this way? How do the relationships and behaviors in Lisi Harrison's books compare to those you have experienced or seen?

In a well-developed essay, compare relationships and behaviors in *The Clique* novels with those you have experienced or seen. Include facts, details, and examples to support your comparison.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 2 – Grades 6-8

"Colony in the Sky" by Kim Stanley Robinson (pilot)

Kim Stanley Robinson's "Colony in the Sky" describes the transformation of Mars into another Earth through terraforming.

After carefully reading "Colony in the Sky," write a multi-paragraph summary describing the author's main idea. Be sure to use specific details and examples from the text to support your response.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Common Characteristics of Greek Myths (pilot)

Characters, settings, and themes are some of the features Greek myths share. After comparing several Greek myths, determine the common characteristics or features of the stories.

In a multi-paragraph essay, discuss the common features or characteristics of the Greek myths you studied. Be sure to include details from the myths to support your discussion.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 7 – Grade 8

Compare/Contrast *Lord of the Flies* Novel and Film (pilot)

After reading William Golding's novel *Lord of the Flies* and then watching the film version, you will notice that there are major differences between the movie and the book. Despite the obvious modern changes, does the film stay true to the themes in Golding's novel? Does the watcher of the film feel "mankind's essential illness" as deeply as the reader of the novel?

In a well-developed essay, compare and contrast the themes in the *Lord of the Flies* novel with the film. Convince your audience by discussing the fear, the beast, and the descent into savagery.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 2 – Grades 6-8

Compare Other Stories of Greed to *The Pearl* (pilot)

Greed causes much pain and heartache in the novel *The Pearl*. In the story, Kino discovers a large pearl at the bottom of the sea. Possession of the pearl, however, causes many instances of violence, betrayal, and greed, which ultimately lead to tragedy. How does this story compare to other stories of greed in our society?

In a multi-paragraph essay, compare modern stories of greed to the story of *The Pearl*. Include details and examples from the text to support your comparison.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Conflict in *Twilight* by Stephenie Meyer (pilot)

Conflict functions as a major force in the novel *Twilight* by Stephenie Meyer. Were the conflicts in the story within one character or between characters? How are the conflicts resolved? Why are the conflicts important to the novel?

In a detailed essay, discuss a major conflict in the novel using details and examples from the text to explain what the conflict is about, who is involved, and how it is resolved.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 2 – Grades 6-8

Connections with "The Lion and the Three Bulls" (pilot)

As you read the Aesop's fable "The Lion and the Three Bulls," pay particular attention to the moral of the story: "United we stand; divided we fall."

After reading the story, think about what this quote means and how the lion's strategy illustrates this quote. Have you experienced or observed something that demonstrates this idea?

In a well-developed essay, relate the moral of the story with a personal experience you had or a situation you observed.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Critique of *The Outsiders* (pilot)

In a literary critique, critics analyze the characters, action, humor, descriptions, and dialogue in a work rather than just retell the story. After reading *The Outsiders*, what aspect of the novel would you include in a critique? Did you find the plot to be especially captivating? Are the literary elements skillfully interwoven?

In a detailed essay, critique the novel *The Outsiders*. Include references to the novel for support.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 2 – Grades 6-8

***Dar and the Spear-Thrower* by Marjorie Cowley (pilot)**

In the book *Dar and the Spear-Thrower* by Marjorie Cowley, Dar embarks on a dangerous adventure to obtain his own spear-thrower. Dar matures and changes from the book's beginning to its end, as he pursues his quest and obtains the spear-thrower.

In a multi-paragraph essay, discuss the ways in which Dar matures and changes through his quest to obtain a spear-thrower. Include details from the story to support your thesis.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

***Day of the Butterfly* by Alice Munro (pilot)**

In *Day of the Butterfly*, 12-year-old Helen, the narrator of the story, realizes that one of her classmates, Myra, is an outcast in their 6th grade class. On several occasions, Helen unexpectedly finds herself approaching Myra.

After carefully examining the characters of Helen and Myra, write an essay in which you take a position on whether you think Helen wants to be Myra's friend. Be sure to support your interpretation with evidence from the story.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 4 – Grades 6-8

***Death on the Nile* (pilot)**

In the novel, *Death on the Nile*, Agatha Christie successfully uses figurative language to create believable characters and a realistic plot. Write an essay in which you discuss how the use of figurative language, such as idioms, similes, and metaphors, helps to develop the characters, setting, and plot of the story. Be sure to support your interpretation with specific examples from the text.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 2 – Grades 6-8

Development of a Theme in a Literary Work (pilot)

Think about the themes expressed in the literature you have been studying in class. How was a theme conveyed through main ideas, key details, and language as it developed over the course of one of the literary works?

In a detailed essay, analyze the development of a theme through the course of a literary work you have recently studied. Include details on story elements, main ideas, and figurative language. Use quotations from the work to support your analysis.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

***Dacey's Song* by Cynthia Voigt (pilot)**

In English class, Mina and Dacey wrote essays about people they knew who had experienced conflict. Imagine the essay that Wilhemina Smiths might write about Dacey and the conflicts in her life. Write a character sketch of Dacey Tillerman as seen through Mina's eyes. Include details from the story.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

***Dinosaur Parents, Dinosaur Young* by Kathleen Weidner Zoehfeld (pilot)**

Imagine that you are a paleontologist with Roy Chapman Andrews (1923) or Dr. Norell (1993) in the Gobi Desert, Dr. Horner in Montana, or Dr. Chiappe in Argentina. You are keeping a journal of daily events and discoveries.

Write a journal entry describing what fossils you and others have discovered, what they look like, and what conclusions can be drawn from the evidence.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 7 – Grades 6-8

Dramatic Production of a Literary Work (pilot)

Audio, film, and live productions present literary works from new and different perspectives. The differences may be due to unique techniques or choices of the actors and director.

After experiencing a literary work in two different forms of production (live, audio, or film), write a detailed essay discussing the differences between the two versions of the work. Refer to these versions to support your discussion.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Effective Habits of Successful Teens (pilot)

The Seven Habits of Highly Effective Teens, by Sean Covey, has become popular among teens and teachers for its suggestions to teenagers on how to become an effective person. Which of the seven habits have you incorporated into your life? Which habits have proven more difficult to adopt?

In a well-developed essay, describe the habits of highly effective teens that you have been able to adopt and which you have had more difficulties adopting. Support your description with details and examples.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 6 – Grades 6-8

Effect of Choice of Narrator in *Stargirl* (pilot)

The novel *Stargirl* by Jerry Spinelli details the relationship between a teenage boy named Leo and an eccentric new girl at his high school who calls herself Stargirl. The story is told through the first-person narration of Leo. How does the author's choice of narrator in this novel affect the work? How would the novel have been different if Stargirl had been the narrator?

In a well-developed essay, analyze the author's choice of narrative point of view in *Stargirl*. Discuss the effect achieved by using Leo as the narrator versus a different narrator.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

***Eleanor Roosevelt: A Life of Discovery* by Russell Freedman (pilot)**

When a famous person dies, you will see an obituary in the newspaper that informs readers about that person's death and gives information about the person's life and accomplishments.

Imagine that you are a newspaper reporter, and your assignment is to write the obituary for Eleanor Roosevelt, who has just died. Include details from the book in the obituary to make it interesting and accurate.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

"End of the Game" by Julio Cortazar (pilot)

All three sisters in "End of the Game" by Julio Cortazar are quite energetic and imaginative. However, as they played their game of "Statues and Attitudes" down by the railroad tracks, Letitia seemed to stand out. What are the possible reasons for Letitia's privileged position?

Write an essay in which you discuss why you believe Letitia is the leader of the game. Be sure to support your interpretation with evidence from the story.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 2 – Grades 6-8

"Everybody is Different, but the Same Too" by Nilou (pilot)

In "Everybody is Different, but the Same Too," the author discusses various cultural differences in a multi-cultural nation.

After carefully reading "Everybody is Different, but the Same Too," write a multi-paragraph essay analyzing the main idea of the article. Be sure to use specific details and examples from the text to support your response.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

"Exile Eyes" by Agate Nesaule (pilot)

In her personal narrative, Nesaule describes her impressions as a young refugee in America encountering other exiles. Her experiences shape her attitude toward refugees.

After carefully reading "Exile Eyes," write a multi-paragraph summary describing the author's experiences with the recent refugees. Be sure to use specific details and examples from the text to support your response.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 2 – Grades 6-8

"False Expectations" (pilot)

After carefully reading the story, write a multi-paragraph essay in which you analyze the characters and main idea of the story. Be sure to use specific details and examples from the story to support your response.

False Expectations

"Quit pouting Donna. You're such a baby," Penny murmured to her little sister, who was already sulking in the back seat.

"Hmmm. Pout. I'll show you pouting!" Donna thought to herself as she visualized the days of driving ahead. "Some vacation," she whispered under her breath, quiet enough so her father wouldn't hear.

She'd been trying for weeks to get her mom to agree with her plan. A week with her best friend sounded like the perfect way to start off summer vacation, but unfortunately, Dad stepped in to veto the whole proposal.

"It'll be good for her to experience seeing the country. She'll learn a lot," he'd told her mom.

"Why do I need to learn anything?" Donna had protested to her mom. "I'll be on vacation! Don't you people understand the meaning of va-ca-tion?"

The sound of her mom's voice and the car's ignition brought Donna back to the reality of the present.

"All because of you," Donna thought as she glared at her "perfect" sister sitting in front of her. "Who ever heard of anyone wanting to go all the way to Texas for college when there are tons of great universities right here?"

"Donna? Did you need to use the restroom before we get going?"

"No, Mom," Donna moaned.

Her mom looked back over her shoulder to see Donna hanging her head and Penny rolling her eyes at her immature sister. "Let's go then," she announced cheerily.

As they made their way out of the city, past the signs and billboards at every glance, Donna got tired of sulking, so she shifted her weight and turned to look out the back window of the minivan. Admiring the new clusters of violets along the roadside, Donna envisioned the scenery to come: flat, dry land, cactus, tumbleweed, and a lot of cowboys herding their cattle while singing, "Home on the Range." She knew it couldn't be all that predictable, but she had her doubts. Figuring she should take advantage of the inspirational landscape while it was available, Donna took her sketchbook from her backpack and began to draw.

"See, there's always something to do on a road trip!" Dad announced proudly as he checked Donna's progress through the rear-view mirror. Pretending she didn't hear the comment, Donna continued sketching.

As she gave extra attention to the shading of a flower's stem, Donna wondered what she would do for the next week. It wasn't like it had been when she was younger. She and Penny probably wouldn't be playing cards or singing songs the way they did when they drove to Disney World. Besides, all Penny seemed interested in these days, besides her schoolwork and boys, was browsing all the catalogs the universities were sending her. Even though she had a year of high school to go, Penny was totally focused on college! Donna shook her head. She just didn't understand. "Dad keeps telling me college is closer than I think," Donna thought to herself, "but I'm not even in high school yet. Man, growing up is going to be the pits."

Somewhere between her fifth sketch, a hamburger to go, and a very long nap across the backseat, Donna heard her father announce, "We're halfway to Texas!"

"Great." Donna replied with absolutely no enthusiasm. "Then we just have to ride another couple of hours to get through cow country to wherever it is we're going."

"Oh, so you DO know something about the great state of Texas?" her dad replied coyly.

"Of course I do. We've all done the official "pick a state" project in social studies. Everybody researches a state and then has to present all that stuff to the class." With drama, she announced, "Texas. The Lone Star State. It's the second largest state in the country, and it's known for the Alamo, cowboys, and longhorn cattle. It's home to the late President Johnson, thirty-sixth President of the United States, the Dallas Cowboys football team, and a rodent-looking animal called the armadillo." Donna finished her lecture with a smile as she saw her dad looking at her through the mirror.

"That's my girl," Donna's dad boasted. "Always knows the basics on just about everything. But is she willing to discover something for herself? Is she willing to get the real story?"

"Oh Dad. There is no REAL story. I know what I'm going to see, and it's going to be boring!"

"Uh-huh," he responded and turned to smile at his wife.

The van had been quiet all night. Donna's parents must have stopped and changed drivers along the way because her mom was now driving. She opened her eyes a little more to see her dad asleep, leaning against a pillow tucked against the window. Her sister slept, stretched out in the seat in front of her. Donna closed her eyes again and rolled over, wondering why her dad had to be one of those who was so anxious to get somewhere; he refused to stop driving and sleep in a motel. Unable to get comfortable, she opened her eyes and looked up. She could just see out the top of the back window.

The sky was radiantly intriguing. There were so many shades of blue and pink, Donna couldn't help but push herself up on her elbow to see more. Peering out the side window, watching the sun rise up over a hill, she took in the picturesque grass and the cows slowly feeding along a wire fence that was just a few yards from the highway. As if it were a reflex, Donna reached down for her sketchbook and never even noticed the smile on her father's face as he awoke and turned around to see his daughter discover Texas.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 4 – Grades 6-8

Figurative Language in *The Pearl* (pilot)

In the novel *The Pearl*, John Steinbeck successfully uses figurative language to create believable characters, a realistic plot, and to help the reader see ordinary things in new ways.

In a multi-paragraph essay, discuss how the use of figurative language, such as similes, metaphors, and personification, helps to develop the characters, setting, and plot of the story. Be sure to support your interpretation with specific examples from the text.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Flour Babies by Anne Fine (pilot)

Think of Simon Martin as the subject of an experiment. As the story unfolded, what happened to Simon? Write a "lab report" about Simon. Tell what happened in the story and how Simon changed as a result of the experiment. Include details from the story in your report.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 5 – Grades 6-8

Form Contributes to Meaning (pilot)

When they write, authors and poets often select a form or structure, such as soliloquy, monologue, sonnet, or haiku, for a desired effect or meaning.

After reading a drama or poem, write a multi-paragraph essay discussing the impact of the work's form on its meaning. Be sure to refer to the work to support your discussion.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 2 – Grades 6-8

"Going Overboard" (pilot)

After carefully reading the story, write a multi-paragraph essay in which you analyze the characters and main idea of the story. Be sure to use specific details and examples from the story to support your response.

Going Overboard

Zoe stood blinking at the bright sun in the dirt parking lot as all her friends and classmates got off the bus. The small lake sparkled in the distance, surrounded on three sides by bright green hills. Zoe took all of this in and sighed. "Another class trip," she mumbled to herself. "Why do we go through this farce every year?"

A week before she had asked her mother if she could stay home when the class went to Fuller Lake State Park for their class party. The discussion didn't go the way Zoe wanted and ended with her stomping up the stairs to her room. This was how several discussions with her Mom had ended recently.

A sharp elbow in her side snapped her out of her brooding.

"Hey, let's hurry up and get to the boathouse so we can get one of the kayaks!" her friend Lindsey whispered hoarsely. She didn't even break stride, but after a few steps turned around and yelled, "Come on!" Lindsey was Zoe's best friend and the one to whom she confided all of her problems. Zoe always thought of Lindsey's family as one of those stable, fun-loving families that you see on TV reruns from the early 1960s.

Arriving at the boathouse, Zoe and Lindsey got the last of the two-person kayaks. Zoe had been in a canoe only once before and had never been in a kayak, but she did not tell Lindsey that. The kids who got to the boathouse after the girls had to settle for the rusty canoes and leaky rowboats. As Zoe and Lindsey finished zipping up their lifejackets, Zach and Ryan sprinted in. They complained about getting stuck with an older, metal canoe.

"You guys don't know how to paddle that thing," Ryan whined, shrugging toward the kayak.

"Tough luck," Zoe replied as she and Lindsey glided away from the dock.

Out in the middle of the lake, the two girls sat quietly for a moment as they looked back at their friends swimming in the water and running on the beach.

Lindsey broke the silence. "This is so much better than being at school sitting in a stuffy classroom."

Zoe thought for a moment as she watched Zach and Ryan paddle by in their canoe. "You're right, Lindsey. But I've been wondering, how come you're always nice to me even when I'm so grumpy?"

As Zoe finished her sentence, she shifted her weight and the kayak heeled over to that side. Both girls then automatically shifted their weight back to the other side, and the kayak suddenly capsized! The girls came up sputtering and struggling to reach their half-submerged boat. They both realized that they would not be able to drain the kayak and get back to shore. As they were pulling themselves together, they saw Zach and Ryan paddling hard in their direction.

"Are you guys okay?" Zach called anxiously.

"Yeah, we're all right," replied Zoe as she bobbed around in the water. "But I'm not sure what we do now."

Ryan collected the paddles that were drifting away and tied the kayak to the stern of the canoe. The girls gripped the sides of the canoe as the boys stroked extra hard to return them all to the dock safely. All four were soon relieved to be back on solid land, even though the girls had to swallow their pride and thank Ryan and Zach for their help.

"So, are you still happy that you came on the class trip, Zoe?" Lindsey asked later when they were all back in the parking lot getting ready to leave.

"More than ever," Zoe said confidently, "and you know something? That was my first time ever in a kayak!"

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Guilty or Not Guilty in "Bargain" (pilot)

Imagine Mr. Baumer is put on trial for causing Slade's death. Based on your reading, do you believe that Mr. Baumer murdered Slade?

Write a multi-paragraph essay that argues Mr. Baumer's innocence or guilt using evidence from the story to support your position.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 2 – Grades 6-8

"Harrison Bergeron" by Kurt Vonnegut (pilot)

At the end of Kurt Vonnegut's story, "Harrison Bergeron," Harrison, a 14-year-old boy who has mysteriously disappeared, suddenly shows up in a TV studio screaming, "I am the Emperor. Do you hear? I am the Emperor." Do you think Harrison is a hero or a danger to his society?

Write an essay in which you explore whether Harrison Bergeron is a hero or a danger to society. Be sure to support your interpretation with evidence from the story.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 2 – Grades 6-8

Heroes in *The Outsiders* (pilot)

Several characters in S. E. Hinton's *The Outsiders* demonstrate heroic characteristics. In a well-developed essay, define the characteristics of a hero. Then identify one of the characters from the novel as being a hero and, using examples from the text, prove his/her heroism. Include specific incidents from the novel to support your discussion.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 5 – Grade 7

***Holes* by Louis Sachar (pilot)**

In *Holes*, author Louis Sachar uses the device of telling a "story within a story." In what ways are the two stories related? How does the story of Elya Yelnats, Madame Zeroni, Kissin' Kate Barlow, and the first Stanley Yelnats help fill in the "holes" in Stanley and Hector's (Zero's) story? What clues does the earlier story provide to help explain events in the main story?

Write an essay describing how Louis Sachar uses the story-within-a-story device to make *Holes* more interesting and effective.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

"Home" in *Maniac Magee* (pilot)

Jeffrey Lionel "Maniac" Magee is a 12-year-old homeless orphan who jogs into a racially divided town called Two Mills. In his adventures, he lives in several different places with many different types of people. Did Maniac Magee ever find a place that made him feel at home? Of all the places that Maniac lived, which do you think had the greatest impact on him?

In a well-developed essay, choose one of the places in which Maniac Magee lived, and explain why it had the greatest impact on his life. Include facts and details from the story to support your explanation.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Homesick: My Own Story by Jean Fritz (pilot)

Before Jean left China, she and Lin Nai-Nai promised to keep in touch through letters. Imagine that you are Jean, and you are getting ready to write your first letter to Lin Nai-Nai from America. What experiences would you tell about? What personal feelings and thoughts would you express? What questions would you have for Lin Nai-Nai about her new life and the changes that have taken place in China? Write the letter you think Jean would send to Lin Nai-Nai. Include details from the story in your letter.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Hoops by Walter Dean Myers (pilot)

Suppose you work for a newspaper and your job is to write an obituary for Calvin Jones. Write an obituary that tells about his life, his time in the NBA, his marriage, and what happened when he returned to basketball as the coach of the Harlem team. Use details from the story to make the obituary interesting and informative.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Hope in a Hopeless Situation (pilot)

In *Daniel's Story*, by Carol Matas, the main character, Daniel, is treated horribly by his Nazi captors. Throughout his ordeal, he maintains hope and compassion in his heart. If you were in Daniel's position, could you have kept such a positive outlook?

In a well-developed essay, explain how you would have dealt with Daniel's situation.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 2 – Grades 6-8

"How Odin Lost His Eye" by Catherine F. Sellew (pilot)

In the mythical story "How Odin Lost His Eye" by Catherine F. Sellew, Odin gives up his eye for the ability to drink from the well of wisdom.

After carefully reading the selection from "How Odin Lost His Eye," write a multi-paragraph summary demonstrating your understanding of the story's message. Be sure to use specific examples from the text to support your response.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 6 – Grade 8

Humor in A Series of Unfortunate Events (pilot)

A Series of Unfortunate Events is a children's book series of thirteen novels written by Daniel Handler (a.k.a. Lemony Snicket). The series follows the adventures of the three Baudelaire orphans after the death of their parents in a fire. Although adversity is the main idea throughout the series, humor also plays an interesting role. How are elements of humor used in these novels?

In a well-developed essay, discuss how humor is used in this book series. Use facts and examples from the text to support your discussion.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Ida B. Wells: Mother of the Civil Rights Movement (pilot)

Imagine that you are a writer working on a new edition of an encyclopedia, and you are responsible for the volume covering the letter "W." Write an encyclopedia entry for Ida B. Wells. Be sure to include factual information about her life and her most important achievements.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

"I Just Kept on Smiling" by Simon Burt (pilot)

In Simon Burt's short story, "I Just Kept on Smiling," Nicky Carver falsely confesses to the narrator's crime. As Nicky stands on the table in the middle of the refectory, the narrator stands by waiting for Nicky to look his way. When he does, the narrator smiles at him. Why do you think the narrator continued to stare and smile at Nicky Carver?

Write an essay in which you explore why the narrator continued to smile at Nicky after he confessed. Be sure to support your interpretation with evidence from the story.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Injustice in Literature (pilot)

Many literary works have been written about the different kinds of injustice people have faced throughout history. Think about a poem, story, or other work you have read in class about a form of injustice. How did the individual or group react to the injustice?

Write a multi-paragraph essay in which you describe the injustice this individual or group faced and how they reacted to it. Be sure to support your interpretation with specific references to the piece of literature.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8***Insights from the title of *Walk Two Moons* (pilot)**

The title *Walk Two Moons* comes from a Native American expression that suggests that you must "walk for two moons [months]" in a person's moccasins if you want to understand the person.

The narrator of this story is Sal, a thirteen-year-old girl. As the story opens, she tells the reader that, one day in April, her mother went away. Sal does not understand why. A few days later, Sal's father starts chipping and chopping away at a plaster wall in their living room. After he removes the wall, he shows Sal a surprise: behind the plaster wall is a brick fireplace. Later in the story, Sal takes a long car trip with her grandparents. To entertain them, she tells them stories about the strange things that happened to her friend, Phoebe. As Sal tells these stories she realizes that she and Phoebe are like the fireplace and the wall that hid it. If you look carefully behind the story about Phoebe, you'll see that the story is really about Sal.

Explain what new insights Sal gains about her mother and herself as she lives through the events of the novel. Give at least three specific examples of events and the insights or new understandings that resulted. Do not simply retell the story.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8***Interference by Puck and Oberon (pilot)**

In Shakespeare's comedy, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the actions of Puck and Oberon have a direct effect on the other characters in the play.

In a well-developed essay, discuss whether Puck and Oberon should be praised or criticized for interfering with the other characters. Include details from the play to support your discussion.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8****Island of the Blue Dolphins* by Scott O'Dell (pilot)**

Imagine that you are the Aleut girl Tutok who discovered Karana's hiding place. Write a journal entry from Tutok's point of view. Tell about how you found Karana, what she was like, and how you made friends with her.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8****Julie of the Wolves* by Jean Craighead George (pilot)**

Imagine what Miyax/Julie might want to tell her pen pal Amy when she returns to her father's house in Kangik. She has not written to Amy for a long time.

Write a letter from Julie to Amy. Describe what has happened since the last letter and how things have changed.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8***Kira's Decision in *Gathering Blue* by Lois Lowry (pilot)**

At the end of *Gathering Blue* by Lois Lowry, Kira originally plans to return with her father to his new village and start a new life. However, after Kira sees what is causing the clanking sound during the Ruin Song Gathering, she decides that she must remain at the Edifice to help create a better future for everyone in her society.

Write an essay in which you either support or criticize Kira's decision to stay at the Edifice. Why do you think she decided to stay in light of the kind of life she might experience in her father's new village? Be sure to include details and examples from the book to support your decision.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8***Lessons Learned in *The Phantom Tollbooth* (pilot)**

In the story *The Phantom Tollbooth*, Milo doesn't spend time in a classroom, yet he learns the value of education. Write a well-developed essay describing the lessons Milo learns on his journey and how this knowledge helps him along the way. Support your answer using details and examples from the text.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8****Lincoln: A Photobiography* by Russell Freedman (pilot)**

Suppose you were chosen to give a farewell speech honoring President Lincoln at his funeral in 1865. What would you say about him and what he accomplished?

Write a speech about Lincoln that would be appropriate for his funeral. Discuss his achievements and the man himself.

Literary Elements in Horror Fiction (pilot)

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines horror as "painful and intense fear, dread, or dismay." The Horror Writers Association asserts that works across a wide spectrum—from religious texts to fairy tales and psychological thrillers—can be categorized as horror fiction according to this definition. How do literary elements like plot, setting, language, and character development create "fear, dread, or dismay" in works that are considered horror fiction?

Select a literary work that you have recently read and analyze its literary elements for their effectiveness in creating feelings of "fear, dread, or dismay" in readers. In a detailed essay, discuss the ways that literary elements are used in horror fiction to create those feelings. Use examples from the literary work that you analyzed to support your discussion.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

***Long Walk to Freedom* by Nelson Mandela (pilot)**

In the personal memoir *Long Walk to Freedom*, readers are introduced to the life and struggles of a powerful leader, Nelson Mandela.

After carefully reading the selection from the *Long Walk to Freedom*, write a multi-paragraph summary describing the author's experiences. Be sure to use specific examples from the text to support your response.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

***Lord of the Deep* by Graham Salisbury (pilot)**

Suppose you were Alison and you'd been keeping a journal about your trip to Hawaii. What would you write about your day aboard the *Crystal-C*?

Write a journal entry from Alison's point of view. Tell what happened that day on the *Crystal-C*, what you thought of Mikey and Bill, and how the events of the day affected your views of Cal and Uncle Ernie.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 2 – Grades 6-8

"Losing Livie" by Karen Hesse (pilot)

The poem "Losing Livie" by Karen Hesse describes the loss of a friend who is moving away.

After carefully reading "Losing Livie," write a multi-paragraph essay analyzing the main character of the poem, as well as its overall meaning. Be sure to use specific details and examples from the text to support your response.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

***Lost Temple of the Aztecs* by Shelley Tanaka (pilot)**

In the *Lost Temple of the Aztecs*, Cortes asks Moctezuma's messengers, "Are these your gifts of welcome ... Is this all you have brought?"

Imagine you were one of Moctezuma's messengers who delivered gifts to Cortes. Write a multi-paragraph letter to Moctezuma discussing why Cortes responded as he did. Be sure to use specific details and examples from the text to support your response.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 3 – Grades 6-8

Loyalty in *Where the Red Fern Grows* (pilot)

In this powerful story of the relationship between a boy and his dogs, love and loyalty determine much of the action. Billy, the main character, raises two coonhounds named Old Dan and Little Ann. Billy and his dogs form a powerful relationship that ultimately stands the test of time. How might the story have been different if Billy and his dogs had been less loyal to each other?

In a well-developed essay, discuss how specific events in the story may have turned out differently if Billy and his dogs did not have a good relationship. Include facts and details from the story to support your discussion.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Mama Logan and Mother in “Taught Me Purple” (pilot)

Having read Mildred Taylor’s novel *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, now read the poem “Taught Me Purple” by Evelyn Tooley Hunt. How is the mother in the poem both similar to and different from Mama Logan?

In a detailed essay, compare and contrast the qualities and traits of the mother in the poem to those of Mama Logan. Be sure to state clear similarities and differences between the two women with concrete examples and support from the texts.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Matthew Henson at the Top of the World (pilot)

In *Matthew Henson at the Top of the World*, Matthew Henson was invaluable during the journey to the North Pole. How would the expedition have been different without him? Would the expedition still have been a success?

After carefully reading the story, write a multi-paragraph essay in which you describe Matthew Henson's contributions to the success of Robert E. Peary's expedition to the North Pole. Be sure to use specific details and examples from the text to support your response.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Maya Angelou's Influences (pilot)

In the autobiography *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, Maya Angelou shares the traumatic heartaches and struggles she suffered as a child. After carefully reading *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, select one individual who you think was the most influential person in her life. Write a multi-paragraph essay describing who this person was and how he/she was so significant in Maya Angelou's life. Make sure to include details and examples from the text to support your answer.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Meaning of "Your World" by Georgia Douglas Johnson (pilot)

After reading the poem "Your World" by Georgia Douglas Johnson, write a well-developed essay in which you represent your interpretation of the overall meaning of the poem. Support your ideas with examples and/or evidence from the poem.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Modern-Day Adventures like *Treasure Island* (pilot)

In today's world, it is hard to imagine a young boy becoming a member of a crew sailing on a quest to find a pirate's buried treasure. In *Treasure Island*, Jim Hawkins embarks on a journey with pirates where he faces danger at every turn. How might you or a friend become involved in a similar adventure in modern times?

In a multi-paragraph essay, tell of a modern-day adventure similar to Jim Hawkins's experience in *Treasure Island*. Include references to the novel for support.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

***Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH* by Robert C. O'Brien (pilot)**

Which character in *Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH* do you think is the true hero of the story? Write an essay about this character, describing why he or she is the hero and giving examples from the story to support your position. What does this character do that is particularly heroic? What qualities does he or she have that make him or her the hero?

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 4 – Grades 6-8

"Ode to an Artichoke" by Pablo Neruda (pilot)

In "Ode to an Artichoke," Neruda celebrates an ordinary object in a ceremonious poem full of personal emotion and reflection.

After carefully reading the poem, 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 text to support your interpretation.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

***Out of the Dust* by Karen Hesse (pilot)**

Think about what Billie Jo's mother meant to her and how things changed after Ma's death. Write a letter from Billie Jo to her mother, dated January 1936, after Louise has joined the family. Writing as Billie Jo, tell Ma what has changed since she died, how you and Daddy have gotten along, and what you think of Louise.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

***Over Sea, Under Stone* by Susan Cooper (pilot)**

At the end of the story, a reporter asks the Drew children some questions about the grail. Suppose you are a reporter and your assignment is to write an article about the Drew children and how they found the grail.

Write a news article that tells what happened and how the Drew children succeeded in their quest. Use details from the story in your article, and think of a good headline or title for your piece.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Ray Bradbury's "The Drummer Boy of Shiloh" (pilot)

In Ray Bradbury's short story "The Drummer Boy of Shiloh," a frightened drummer boy finds solace and courage in the words of a general the night before a battle.

Write a story about a time in which someone's words of inspiration or advice helped you through a difficult time. Be sure to include details and examples to support your discussion.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Relationships in the Harry Potter Book Series (pilot)

The seven books in the Harry Potter series chronicle seven years of Harry's life. In the course of those years, Harry meets many people with whom he develops a relationship. These relationships grow with Harry, sometimes in unexpected ways.

In a well-developed essay, discuss Harry's relationship with another character and how that relationship develops over time. Include facts and details from the book(s) to support your discussion.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 2 – Grades 6-8

Responding to Malcolm X's Quotation (pilot)

Malcolm X once stated, "I had never been so truly free in my life." After carefully reading Malcolm X's biography by Alex Haley, write a multi-paragraph essay interpreting why he said this phrase and

what he really meant. Be sure to use specific details and examples from the text to support your response.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8
***Ribbons* by Laurence Yep (pilot)**

In *Ribbons*, Robin's life changes dramatically after her grandmother joins the family from China.

In a well-reasoned essay, discuss how Robin's character changes throughout the book. Be sure to support your interpretation with specific details from the story.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8
Literature Standard 9 – Grades 6-8
Roberto Benigni's *Life is Beautiful* (pilot)

In the Roberto Benigni film *Life is Beautiful*, Guido tries to ease the impact of the difficult circumstances on his son Joshua. Compared to other works on the Holocaust, how does Benigni approach the topic differently? What similarities are there between Benigni's film and other Holocaust works?

In a detailed essay, compare and contrast the methods Benigni uses to discuss the Holocaust with other books, plays, or screenplays. Remember to refer to these works to support your discussion.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8
***Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* by Mildred D. Taylor (pilot)**

On the last night of the story, T.J. headed into Strawberry with R.W. and Melvin Simms. Many things happened rapidly after that. Suppose you are a news reporter, and you have investigated the events of that night. Write a news story that tells what happened that night, who was involved, where the events took place, and how everything turned out.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8
***Shipwreck at the Bottom of the World* by Jennifer Armstrong (pilot)**

Suppose you were Percy Blackborrow, the young man who stowed away on the *Endurance*. How do you think he felt about his adventures and experiences?

Write a letter from Blackborrow to his family after his rescue from Elephant Island. Describe what he went through and how he felt. Be sure to include a greeting and a closing in your letter.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8****Sir Walter Raleigh and the Quest for El Dorado* by Marc Aronson (pilot)**

An obituary is a notice that appears in the newspaper(s) to announce that a person has died. It usually gives a summary of the person's life and praises his or her achievements.

Write an obituary for Sir Walter Raleigh as it might appear in a newspaper. Remember that in addition to significant events and/or accomplishments, obituaries often mention special interests or hobbies of the person who has died.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8****Sitting Bull and His World* by Albert Marrin (pilot)**

Suppose you were a scout or a missionary in the West, and you got to know Sitting Bull when you lived in his village for a few weeks. Write a letter to a friend or family member back home that describes Sitting Bull. Give your own impressions of Sitting Bull, what he did, and how he acted at the time you stayed in his village. Use details from the book to make your letter realistic.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8****So Far From the Bamboo Grove* by Yoko Kawashima Watkins (pilot)**

Suppose that the author of this book is going to visit your school, and you have been chosen to introduce her. Write a speech that you could give as an introduction to Yoko Kawashima Watkins if she came to address the students in your school. Tell who Ms. Watkins is and what she has experienced. Use details from the book to make your speech interesting and informative.

*Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8****Stealing Home: The Story of Jackie Robinson* (pilot)**

After reading *Stealing Home: The Story of Jackie Robinson*, think about the impact Jackie's decision had on Major League Baseball and the rest of the nation. What challenges did Jackie overcome in making his mark on history?

Write an essay in which you discuss the challenges Jackie faced when he joined Major League Baseball and how his actions changed the nation. Be sure to support your position by citing relevant details from the book.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 5 – Grade 8

Structure of Two or More Texts (pilot)

The structure of a text is selected for its effect on the reader or audience. For example, a newspaper article, diary entry, short story, and poem written about the same event will be similar yet strikingly different in the presentation of information and feelings.

After reading two or more texts, write a multi-paragraph essay comparing and contrasting how their structures have an effect on meaning. Include examples from the text to support your discussion.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 4 – Grades 6-8

Style in the Poems of E.E. Cummings (pilot)

The poems of E.E. Cummings are known for their unconventional syntax and use of language. Do you feel that this unique style adds or detracts from the effectiveness of his poems? Write a multi-paragraph essay explaining your opinion. Make sure to include specific examples from his poetry to support your explanation.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 2 – Grades 6-8

"Sundiata, Lion King of Mali" by David Wisniewski (pilot)

The story, "Sundiata, Lion King of Mali" by David Wisniewski, tells the tale of a West African ruler.

After carefully reading the story, write a multi-paragraph summary that identifies the underlying meaning of the story and recounts its important events. Be sure to summarize the story in your own words.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 2 – Grades 6-8

Survival Themes in *Two Old Women* (pilot)

Rugged self-reliance and leaning on others to survive are the two themes in the novel *Two Old Women*. These themes are illustrated by the survival stories of the old women and the rest of their tribe.

In a multi-paragraph essay, discuss the interrelationship of these themes and how they relate in a healthy culture, like that of the reunited villagers. Use specific examples from the novel to illustrate each theme and to describe how the themes are interdependent.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 2 – Grades 6-8

"Ta-Na-E-Ka" by Mary Whitebird (pilot)

The story, "Ta-Na-E-Ka" by Mary Whitebird, deals with the traditions of a Native American tribe.

After carefully reading the story, write a multi-paragraph essay in which you present your understanding of the overall meaning of the story. Be sure to use specific details from the story to support your interpretation.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

***The Adventures of Sojourner* by Susi Trautmann Wunsch (pilot)**

The Adventures of Sojourner describes the task Sojourner, a robot, undertook when it was sent to explore Mars. After carefully reading the story, write a multi-paragraph summary of this mission, including specific details and examples from the text.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

***The Bone Detectives* by Donna M. Jackson (pilot)**

Suppose you are a news reporter assigned to one of the breakthrough investigations in this book. Choose one of the investigations described in *The Bone Detectives* and write a newspaper article about it. Create an eye-catching headline for your article and state the main idea in the first paragraph. The rest of the article should present details that tell who, what, when, where, and why, based on information in the book.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 2 – Grades 6-8

"The Brother I Never Had" by Gim George (pilot)

"The Brother I Never Had" shares the personal experiences of the author, Gim George.

After carefully reading the selection "The Brother I Never Had," write a multi-paragraph summary demonstrating your understanding of the story's message. Be sure to use specific examples from the text to support your response.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

***The Cat and the Coffee Drinkers* by Max Steele (pilot)**

In *The Cat and the Coffee Drinkers*, Miss Effie, the kindergarten teacher, teaches her young students some interesting ideas and skills, including how to drink coffee, dust, use good manners, read, and kill a cat.

Why do you think the narrator is most impressed by his final experience with Miss Effie, when she leaves the tool shed, telling her kindergarten students that she has nothing more to teach them? Write an essay in which you discuss why this is the narrator's most vivid memory of Miss Effie. Be sure to support your interpretation with evidence from the story.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

***The Chimpanzees I Love: Saving Their World and Ours* by Jane Goodall (pilot)**

Suppose you are an assistant doing fieldwork for Jane Goodall in Gombe. You are chosen to follow one family of chimps for a whole day, from the time they wake up until they go to sleep again. (You can make up a family and name them, rather than using actual chimps.)

Write a journal entry describing a typical day, including the chimps' activities (where they go, what they do) and their interactions with one another and with other animals. Use details from the book to make sure the information in your entry is accurate.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 2 – Grades 6-8

***The Effect of Blindness in The Cay* (pilot)**

After experiencing a shipwreck and then becoming separated from his mother, Phillip Enright finds himself blind and in the company of an African-American man named Timothy and a cat named Stew Cat. Now stranded on a barren Caribbean island, Phillip is reluctant to trust Timothy, but by the end of the book, Phillip's attitude has changed dramatically. Had Phillip not been blind, how would his relationship with Timothy been different? Would Phillip's feelings have changed at the end of the book?

In a well-developed essay, explain the effect of Phillip's blindness on his attitude toward and relationship with Timothy. Include facts and details from the story to support your explanation.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 2 – Grades 6-8

"The Enchanted Raisin" by Jacqueline Balcells (pilot)

In the story "The Enchanted Raisin," the author states, "You don't miss your water until the well runs dry." What does the author imply with this statement? What do you think is the author's message?

After carefully reading the story, write a multi-paragraph essay demonstrating your understanding of this statement and its significance. Be sure to include specific examples and details from the text to support your interpretation.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

***The Examination* by Malcolm Bosse (pilot)**

In what ways were Lao Chen and Lao Hong alike, and in what ways were they different? Write an essay comparing and contrasting the two brothers. Use details from the story in your comparison/contrast.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

***The Gold Cadillac* by Mildred D. Taylor (pilot)**

The novella *The Gold Cadillac* by Mildred D. Taylor describes the experiences of a young girl on her trip down South.

After carefully reading the story, write a multi-paragraph essay explaining how these experiences affected her perception of herself, her family, and the world around her. Be sure to use specific details and examples from the text to support your response.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

***The Incredible Journey of Lewis and Clark* by Rhoda Blumberg (pilot)**

Lewis and Clark were supposed to write to President Jefferson when they got to the Pacific Ocean. If they had done so, what would the letter have said?

Imagine that you were a member of Lewis and Clark's group. In your own words, write a letter to President Jefferson describing the most important discoveries of the trip west. Remember to include information about the health and welfare of the crew, major events that occurred, places visited by the group, and experiences with different Indian tribes.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 2 – Grades 6-8

"The King of Mazy May" by Jack London (pilot)

Jack London's story "The King of Mazy May" takes a look at the conflict between gold seekers and dangerous outlaws during the gold rush.

After carefully reading "The King of Mazy May" by Jack London, write a multi-paragraph essay describing the story's main idea. Be sure to include specific examples and details from the text to support your interpretation.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

***The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* by C.S. Lewis (pilot)**

Each character in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* is unique and has his or her own distinct personality. Who do you think are the most interesting characters in the story? How are they alike and how are they different?

After carefully reading the book, write a multi-paragraph essay in which you compare and contrast two characters from *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* describing the ways in which the characters are similar and different. Be sure to use specific details and examples from the text to support your response.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 2 – Grades 6-8

Theme in "Two Kinds" and "An American Story" (pilot)

The short stories "Two Kinds" by Amy Tan and "An American Story" by Jacob Lawrence, both tell the tale of a journey to a better life in America. One experience is of a Chinese immigrant in America, while the other is of the migration of an African American boy's family to the North during the days of segregation in America. Although the characters in both stories face different circumstances, many similarities can be seen between the two texts.

After reading both stories, think of a theme the two texts share. In a well-developed essay, compare the common theme. Provide specific evidence and examples from both stories to support your response.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 2 – Grades 6-8

Theme in "Under the Rice Moon" (pilot)

"Under the Rice Moon" by Rhiannon Puck tells a story about a caged bird and a sickly young girl who understand one another. In the story, the caged bird continuously chirps, expressing how much it yearns to fly under the rice moon. What does this indicate about the bird? What does each character in the story do with the bird? Why does the sickly young girl release the bird?

After reading the story, write a well-developed essay discussing the theme or message and how the author uses the bird and characters in the story to express the message. Be sure to include details and examples from the story to support your ideas.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 2 – Grades 6-8

The Monkey and the Crocodile, a Jataka Tale (pilot)

The Jataka tales are similar to Western fables, which involve animals in moralistic stories. In *The Monkey and the Crocodile*, the animal characters are key to the development of the story.

After reading *The Monkey and the Crocodile*, write a well-developed essay in which you describe how the qualities of the characters affect the plot and resolution of the story. Include details from the story to support your description.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

"The Sand Castle" by Alma Luz Villanueva (pilot)

After carefully reading the short story "The Sand Castle" by Alma Luz Villanueva, write a summary of the story in your own words. Be sure to include specific details from the story to support your interpretation.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

***The Scorpions* by Walter Dean Myers (pilot)**

In the novel *The Scorpions*, the characters are not static – rather, they change and learn from their experiences. In a well-organized, multi-paragraph essay, discuss the ways in which the main characters Tito and Jamal change. Support your analysis with details from the story.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

***The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants* (pilot)**

The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants focuses on the lives of four best friends, Carmen, Lena, Bridget, and Tibby, who are spending the summer apart for the first time. In the novel, the girls find a pair of jeans that magically fits each of them perfectly. Think about the role the pair of pants play in the novel. What do these pants mean to the girls? What role do the pants play in their lives?

In a detailed essay, explain the role/significance of the pair of pants in *The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants* and its importance to each of the four main characters. Remember to cite details and examples from the text to support your response.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

"The Third Wish" by Joan Aiken (pilot)

"The Third Wish" by Joan Aiken tells the story of a man who is granted three wishes for performing a good deed.

After carefully reading the story, write a multi-paragraph essay in which you present a summary of the story. Be sure to summarize the main idea and details in your own words.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

The Thirteenth Labor of Hercules (pilot)

One of the most famous myths surrounding Hercules is the Twelve Labors, in which he looked for atonement from his past by completing twelve tasks that were nearly impossible to finish. By completing these Labors, he would not only help others by making the world a safer place, but he would also help himself by clearing his conscience of his past wrongs. These challenges placed Hercules in many dangerous situations, as he faced many famous mythical creatures in order to redeem himself.

Imagine that you were asked to create the thirteenth Labor for Hercules to accomplish. In a detailed story, describe the amazing adventure Hercules would have. What types of creatures and challenges would Hercules face on the path to completing this task? Include details to support your story.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle by Avi (pilot)

At the end of the story, Charlotte returns to the *Seahawk*. Suppose that she begins a new journal after her first full day at sea. Pretending that you are Charlotte, write a journal entry for the first day. Include details of her feelings about leaving her home and family in Providence and setting sail with her old crewmates.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 2 – Grades 6-8

The View from Saturday by E. L. Konigsburg (pilot)

Near the end of the book, Mr. Singh told Mrs. Olinski that it often takes more courage to be a passenger than a driver. How might this statement apply to Mrs. Olinski, to The Souls, and to teenagers in general? Write a letter to Mr. Singh in which you discuss his idea. You may agree or disagree with his statement. Use details from the story to support your views.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

The Wright Brothers: How They Invented the Airplane by Russell Freedman (pilot)

Suppose that you are an author who has been chosen to write an encyclopedia entry for the Wright brothers. What information about their lives would you include?

Write an encyclopedia entry for Wilbur and Orville Wright. Tell about their lives in Dayton, Ohio, businesses they were involved in, and their achievements. Use details from the book to make sure the information in your entry is accurate.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

***The Zodiacs* by Jay Neugeboren (pilot)**

In *The Zodiacs* by Jay Neugeboren, Louie Hirshfield, "probably the worst athlete in the history of P.S. 92," volunteers his services to be general manager of the Zodiacs' baseball team. Why do you think Louie works so hard to manage the Zodiacs to be the best they can be?

Write an essay in which you explore why Louie worked so hard to manage the Zodiacs. Be sure to support your interpretation with evidence from the story.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

***To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee (pilot)**

Suppose you were Boo Radley and you kept a journal of what happened. Write a journal entry describing the night of the school pageant and the incident with Bob Ewell, from Boo Radley's point of view. Be sure to describe the events as they occurred and your feelings about what happened. Use details from the story to make your journal entry realistic.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

"Too Soon a Woman" by Dorothy M. Johnson (pilot)

In literature, characters make choices and perform acts based on their own personal motivations. In the short story "Too Soon a Woman," the heroine Mary made many important decisions and took bold actions.

After carefully reading the story, write a multi-paragraph essay describing Mary's motivations for her actions. Be sure to use specific details and examples from the text to support your response.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

***True Love in A Midsummer Night's Dream* (pilot)**

In Shakespeare's comedy of errors, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, many characters struggle with identifying the difference between true love and infatuation. Which of the following pairs of characters best exemplifies true love: Theseus and Hippolyta, Hermia and Lysander, Demetrius and Helena, or Titania and Oberon?

In a multi-paragraph essay, discuss the character pair that best exemplifies true love. Include details from the play to support your discussion.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8
“Two Kinds” by Amy Tan (pilot)

In “Two Kinds” by Amy Tan, Jing Mei's mother tries to teach her important skills that will ensure her success in the future.

Write a multi-paragraph essay in which you explain the skills she learned and how they could help you become successful in your life. Be sure to use specific details and examples from the text to support your response.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8
Unlikely Friends in *Charlotte's Web* (pilot)

The story follows the lives of a pig named Wilbur and a spider named Charlotte, who quickly become close friends. Charlotte is wise and loving and successfully launches a campaign to save Wilbur's life. These traits are not usually associated with a creature like a spider, which is a bug most of us fear. How does the fact that Charlotte is a spider affect the story? Would the story have been different if Charlotte were a butterfly or some other less-feared creature?

In a multi-paragraph essay, discuss Charlotte's role as a spider and explain how this affects the story. Are there specific qualities she possesses that influence the outcome of the novel? Include facts and details from the text to support your discussion.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8
Virtue in *Black Beauty* (pilot)

Virtue is defined as moral excellence, goodness, or righteousness. In the book *Black Beauty*, Anna Sewell tells her story from the perspective of the horse Beauty. Through Beauty's thoughts and trials, we are allowed to see individuals who are very virtuous and those with little moral value. How do you believe Beauty views humans? Would she consider us to be virtuous or immoral creatures?

In a well-developed essay, explain Beauty's view of humans. Be sure to use specific examples and details from the text to support your response.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8
***Walk Two Moons* by Sharon Creech (pilot)**

Gramps broke the law when he gave Sal the keys to his car and allowed her to drive to Lewiston. Did Gramps do the right thing? If you were "walking in Gramps's moccasins," what would you have done?

Suppose that you are Gramps. Write a letter to Sal's father in which you explain why you let Sal take the car. Describe the situation in Coeur d'Alene, the risks you were taking, and the reasons for your decision. Be sure to include important details from the story to support your answer.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

***Watership Down* by Richard Adams (pilot)**

You can infer from the Epilogue that Hazel died at the end. Hazel lived longer than most rabbits and accomplished many things. Write an obituary for Hazel that could appear in a newspaper for rabbits. Describe the major events in Hazel's life, what he was like, and what he achieved for the rabbits of *Watership Down*.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

"What's Really in a Name?" by Joan Burditt (pilot)

Joan Burditt's informational article "What's Really in a Name?" recalls a childhood acquaintance, Patsy, who changed her name when she became an actress.

After carefully reading the article, write a detailed summary in your own words of the main details from the article. Be sure to support your summary with references to the article.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

***Woodson* by Gary Paulsen (pilot)**

Suppose you had a chance to visit Gary Paulsen at his home in Minnesota (at the time described in this book), and you want to tell a friend about your visit. Write a letter to your friend describing Paulsen's home, the animals he keeps, and the way he lives. Use details from the book to make your letter interesting and informative.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

"Young Arthur" by Robert D. San Souci (pilot)

The story, "Young Arthur" by Robert D. San Souci, recounts King Arthur's childhood.

After carefully reading the story, write a multi-paragraph essay in which you present your understanding of the characters. Be sure to support your analysis with specific references to the story.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Literature Standard 2 – Grades 6-8

"Zebra" by Chaim Potok (pilot)

After reading "Zebra" by Chaim Potok, write a response to the short story in which you demonstrate your understanding of the author's message. Be sure to support your interpretation with relevant information and details from the story.

Literature Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

"Zoo Island" by Tomas Rivera (pilot)

After carefully reading "Zoo Island" by Tomas Rivera, think about how the farm settlement got its name. In a short essay, analyze why it is Don Simon who suggests the name "Zoo Island." Be sure to support your interpretation with evidence from the story.