



Pace Charter School of Hamilton

Language Arts Reading Curriculum  
Grade 8

This curriculum may be modified through varying techniques, strategies, and materials as per student needs and an individual student's Individualized Educational Plan (IEP).

## Grade 8 Reading Unit 1: Short Stories

**Content Area:** Language Arts

**Grade Level:** English Grade 8

### Summary and Rationale

In this unit, students will have opportunities to read short stories to track what and how much they are reading, to react and respond to their reading using a variety of strategies for specific reading skills, to reflect on their reading lives, and to set personal reading goals. Students will read with stamina and engagement, monitor for comprehension. Specifically, students will practice and apply the close reading strategies of tracking character progression and author's craft to enhance the skills of effective reading. As a result, students will read more, be accountable for their reading goals, and increase their ability to comprehend and think deeply as they read. Alfred Tatum describes the beauty of textual lineages – the literature and nonfiction that has deeply influenced us, either by filling us with new ideas, or with visions of possibility, or with comfort or escape. This unit also aims to inspire students to take charge of their independent reading life so that they follow the authors and literary traditions they love, in trajectories they can stay on as adult readers. In this unit, we want to instill the reading habits that have less to do with skill and more to do with loving reading. We do this in the firm belief that it matters that kids love to read. The reading they do for school will be just a small percentage, then, of their total reading life. Reading is, after all, a combination of skill and will.

### Recommended Pacing

September-October (Approximately 6 weeks)

### New Jersey Student Learning Standards

The standards define general, cross-disciplinary literacy expectations that must be met for students to be prepared to enter college and workforce-training programs ready to succeed. The K–12 grade-specific standards define end-of-year expectations and a cumulative progression designed to enable students to meet college and career readiness expectations no later than the end of high school.

Students advancing through the grades are expected to meet each year's grade-specific standards, retain or further develop skills and understandings mastered in preceding grades, and work steadily toward meeting the more general expectations described by the standards.

RL.8.2, RL.8.4, RL.8.5, RL.8.6, RL.8.8, RI.8.5, RI.8.8, SL.8.1, SL.8.1.a, SL.8.1.b, SL.8.1.c, SL.8.1.d

### Instructional Focus

#### Unit Enduring Understandings

- The goal of reading is to make meaning from text.
- Fiction can entertain while revealing truths.

- Literature can reflect, clarify, and criticize the times it portrays.
- Effective readers use specific strategies to help them develop the skills needed to comprehend texts and think deeply about them (to make meaning from what they are reading).
- Words have multiple meanings.
- Authors sometimes convey meaning indirectly.
- Readers are entitled to an opinion about what a text means, but some opinions are more supported by text evidence than others.
- Effective readers bring various stances to make meaning from text.
- Genre influences organization, technique, and style.
- Different texts have different structures.
- Close reading focuses student reading, analysis, and argument of text.

### **Unit Essential Questions**

- How does the support and collaborative interpretation of reading groups facilitate understanding of short stories?
- How can I read to notice and analyze how authors write to convey themes, including author's use of archetypal characters and allusions to other texts?

### **Objectives**

#### **Students will be able to:**

- Determine themes/central ideas & their development throughout a text.
- Notice patterns and complications to patterns in texts.
- Determine how the writer uses characterization, setting and plot to convey meaning.
- Notice and understand complicated messages.
- Identify figurative language & connotative meanings.
- Analyze word choice and its effect on mood & tone.
- Noticing literary elements and how they work together to convey meaning.
- Analyze text structures & their contributions to meaning & style.
- Use graphic organizers to compare texts.
- Identify allusions to themes, patterns of events and characters from myths, traditional stories, etc.
- Self-assess reading about writing & use of best textual evidence.
- Develop and refine key concepts.
- Evaluate arguments by assessing reasoning and evidence.
- Recognize irrelevant evidence.

## Activities

### Students will participate in:

- Comprehension activities
- Whole group/small group discussions
- Note taking
- Grammar activities
- Vocabulary activities
- Literary analysis essay

## Methods of Assessment/Evaluation

### Students will complete:

- Reading Group Discussions
- Exit Slips
- Classwork/Independent Work
- Quizzes
- Tests
- Projects
- Grammar Quizzes

## Resources

### Suggested Resources:

- The Bet: Anthon Chekov
- Thank You Ma'am: Langston Hughes
- The Lottery: Shirley Jackson
- The Monkey's Paw: W.W. Jacobs
- The Story of an Hour: Kate Chopin
- The Most Dangerous Game: Robert Connell
- The Interlopers: Saki (H.H. Munro)
- Rules of the Game: Amy Tan
- The Scarlet Ibis: James Hurst
- The Necklace: Guy De Maupassant
- Excerpts from "7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens"

## Grade 8 Reading Unit 2: Genocide

**Content Area:** Language Arts

**Grade Level:** English Grade 8

### Summary and Rationale

The goal of this unit is to teach eighth graders that when researchers begin to research, they need to suspend judgment and remain open to different sides of an issue – a skill they need to carry through to adulthood. Another goal is to inspire the belief that one needs to read more than once on a subject in order to build an informed opinion. This unit is planned in the hope that, by its end, students will no longer believe that nonfiction is “true,” but will perceive that it is someone’s perspective on the truth. While some research is necessary in this unit, the true focus of the work will be on how to read more critically, so that students do better work with the texts they have than just accumulating as many texts as they can locate.

In this unit, readers will be pushed toward deep comprehension from the get-go through the study of world genocides in book clubs. Additionally, there will be a new strand of focus on literary terms, analysis and critique. The best way to deepen our thinking and increase engagement, while also quickly forging relationships in the classroom is to read in the company of others. In this unit, students will be asked to read aloud in class as well as read additional material outside of class and arrive to class prepared to discuss their reading.

Students will be assigned a selection of texts that center on various world genocides. As the 8th grade curriculum exists as a study of social justice and genocide represents the extreme oppression of people, students will work to understand how tyrannical leaders and governments create genocides. As an exercise in abandoning the pattern of Eurocentric instruction typically taught in American schools, students will be asked to study genocides that have existed around the world, and will apply their knowledge and understanding of genocide in order to develop a well-supported argument about current nations under genocide watch. Students will continue to pull from the close reading skills modeled in previous reading units--as well as those specific to the discourse of social justice, genocide, political corruption, and tyranny.

### Recommended Pacing

October-December

### New Jersey Student Learning Standards

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Students advancing through the grades are expected to meet each year’s grade-specific standards, retain or further develop skills and

understandings mastered in preceding grades, and work steadily toward meeting the more general expectations described by the standards.

RL. 8.1, RL 8.2, RL 8.3, RL.8.4 , RL 8.7, RL 8.9 , RI.8.3, RI.8.6, L.8.5, SL.8.1, SL.8.1.a, SL.8.1.b, SL.8.1.c, SL.8.1.d

## Instructional Focus

### Unit Enduring Understandings

- Genre determines the structure of texts.
- Pictures, graphics, and illustrations can enhance texts.
- There is no such thing as a "neutral" text" because readers bring their personal experiences, perspectives, and philosophies to text.
- Nonfiction texts teach students something new about a subject.
- Narrative nonfiction tells a story that teaches both information and ideas.

### Unit Essential Questions

- How can I use strategies from reading other genres in order to make sense of complicated worlds?
- In what ways does my understanding of these worlds affect underlying ideas the text is highlighting – ideas that might also offer insights or critiques of my own world?
- What are ways I can look at themes that live in each of the texts that I read? How can I trace not only the themes across the text, but the details that support each theme?
- What are ways I can see how themes travel across texts? How can I be sure that with each subsequent text I read, I strengthen my reading by compounding my understanding with the themes from all the texts that came before it?
- How does noticing some traditional literary techniques, themes and archetypes that I see playing out in the stories I have read help strengthen my understanding of those stories?
- How can seeing those same patterns in my life and in world events help me make sense of them as well?
- Why is nonfiction significant to the reader?
- How does nonfiction reflect culture and/or shape it?

### Objectives

#### Students will be able to:

- Use reading strategies to make sense of complicated worlds.
- Observe textual issues for insights and critiques of our world.
- Consider the importance of the historical context.
- Study the author's use of specific motifs such as tyranny, 10 stage of genocide, oppression, empathy and other character archetypes.
- Debate how a character both fits and challenges a traditional archetype.
- To explore multiple nonfiction texts about one subject.

- Use prior knowledge to help them understand what they are reading.
- Determine what the author wants the reader to think and/or feel about the subject.
- Teach others what they have learned about their topic.

## Activities

### Students will participate in:

- Comprehension activities
- Whole group/small group discussions
- Note taking
- Grammar activities
- Vocabulary activities
- Genocide Project/Presentation
- Socratic Discussions

## Methods of Assessment/Evaluation

### Students will complete:

- Reading Group Discussions
- Classwork/Independent Work
- Quizzes
- Tests
- Projects
- Grammar Quizzes
- Vocabulary Quizzes
- Journal Responses

## Resources

### Suggested Resources:

- The Boy in the Striped Pajamas: John Boyne
- The Devil's Arithmetic: Jane Yolen
- The Book Thief: Markus Zusak
- Video: Step by Step: Phases of the Holocaust
- Article: "The Holocaust: Bearing Witness"
- Video: I'm Still Here: Diaries of Young People Who Lived During the Holocaust (00:10-6:00)
- Speech: "The Perils of Indifference"
- Article: "The Rwandan Girl Who Refused to Die" by Fergal Keane
- Terrible Things: Eve Bunting

## Grade 8 Reading Unit 3: Social Issues through Steinbeck

**Content Area:** Language Arts

**Grade Level:** English Grade 8

### Summary and Rationale

In this unit, readers will be pushed toward deep comprehension from the get-go through the study of social issue texts in book clubs. Additionally, there will be a new strand of focus on literary terms, analysis and critique.

The best way to deepen our thinking and increase engagement, while also quickly forging relationships in the classroom is to read in the company of others. In this unit, students will be asked to read a selection of texts that center around various social issues in today's world; issues such as race, gender, education and rape culture. Students will continue to pull from the close reading skills modeled in previous reading units--as well as those specific to the discourse of social justice literature--to explore the complicated themes and real world connections of this text with their group over the course of the remaining weeks.

### Recommended Pacing

January-February

### New Jersey Student Learning Standards

The standards define general, cross-disciplinary literacy expectations that must be met for students to be prepared to enter college and workforce-training programs ready to succeed. The K–12 grade-specific standards define end-of-year expectations and a cumulative progression designed to enable students to meet college and career readiness expectations no later than the end of high school.

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RL. 8.1, RL 8.2, RL 8.3, RL 8.7, RL 8.9 , SL.8.1, SL.8.1.a, SL.8.1.b, SL.8.1.c, SL.8.1.d

### Instructional Focus

#### Unit Enduring Understandings

- Using strategies from reading across genres allows readers to make sense of complicated words.
- Personal understanding of the world affects underlying ideas that are highlighted in texts--ideas that might offer insights



or critiques to concepts that were previously understood.

- Themes can be traces across a text and can be supported by text evidence.
- Reading can be strengthened by compounding prior knowledge of the text, its themes, and its development.
- Understanding literature can be enhanced by noticing traditional literary techniques, themes, and archetypes that exist in the stories.
- Recognizing patterns in life and in world events will yield a richer understanding of social justice literature.

### **Unit Essential Questions**

- How can I use strategies from reading other genres in order to make sense of complicated worlds?
- In what ways does my understanding of these worlds affect underlying ideas the text is highlighting – ideas that might also offer insights or critiques of my own world?
- What are ways I can look at themes that live in each of the texts that I read? How can I trace not only the themes across the text, but the details that support each theme?
- What are ways I can see how themes travel across texts? How can I be sure that with each subsequent text I read, I strengthen my reading by compounding my understanding with the themes from all the texts that came before it?
- How does noticing some traditional literary techniques, themes and archetypes that I see playing out in the stories I have read help strengthen my understanding of those stories?
- How can seeing those same patterns in my life and in world events help me make sense of them as well?

### **Objectives**

#### **Students will be able to:**

- Consider their relationship to alternate societies (historical or contemporary).
- Use reading strategies to make sense of complicated worlds.
- Observe textual issues for insights and critiques of our world.
- Use nuances in text and aha! moments to critique their own worlds.
- Cite textual evidence to make an accurate inference and support analysis of what the text says.
- Study the author's use of motifs such as fear, power, privilege, oppression, hatred, sexism, racism, classism, colorism, ageism to build a theme in an original way.
- Consider how a book's theme mirrors their own world.
- Debate how a character both fits and challenges a traditional archetype.

### **Activities**

#### **Students will participate in:**

- Comprehension activities

- Whole group/small group discussions
- Note taking
- Grammar activities
- Vocabulary activities
- Socratic Discussions

## Methods of Assessment/Evaluation

### Students will complete:

- Reading Group Discussions
- Classwork/Independent Work
- Quizzes
- Tests
- Projects
- Essay
- Grammar Quizzes
- Vocabulary Quizzes
- Journal Responses

## Resources

### Suggested Resources:

- The Pearl: John Steinbeck
- Of Mice and Men: John Steinbeck

## Grade 8 Reading Unit 4: Approaching the Classics

**Content Area:** Language Arts

**Grade Level:** English Grade 8

### Summary and Rationale

Students expand upon the independent skills and strategies previously mastered in the context of social interactions of book clubs. Book clubs push students to read closely, note and develop significant ideas about the text, and engage in meaningful conversations about the text. Through the study of literature and drama, students will be able to begin formulating understandings of conflicts in the world. Students will also engage in a more sophisticated, nuanced analysis of themes in Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* in order to reveal not only its celebrated strengths but also possibly its pitfalls; possible pitfalls could include missing perspectives and unintentional perpetuation of racism.

### Recommended Pacing

March-April

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### Instructional Focus

#### Unit Enduring Understandings

- Literature can reflect, clarify, and criticize the times it portrays.
- Fiction can entertain while revealing truths.
- Great stories/books address universal themes of human existence and conflict.
- Great stories raise questions (and sometimes provide answers).

- Nonfiction provides connections among and distinctions between individuals, ideas, and events.
- Genres influence organization, technique, and style.

### **Unit Essential Questions**

- Why is this literature significant to the reader?
- How can fiction reveal truth?
- What influences in the text change characters?
- Does literature reflect culture or shape it?
- Where have readers seen this idea before?
- How do writers of various genres hook and hold their readers?
- How can I harness a toolkit of strategies to read challenging texts deeply, comparing and contrasting these texts to others, leading literary conversations, and becoming an expert on authors and literary traditions?

### **Objectives**

#### **Students will be able to:**

- Research historical and cultural questions that arise in the process of reading a text.
- Recognize historical context and how it contributes to the story.
- Read across classic texts to analyze differences and perspective.
- Investigate narrative theme, craft and structure.
- Manage interpreting difficult texts with peers.
- Compare summaries or interpretations.
- Turn to literary critics to help illuminate meaning in the text.
- Read across texts for allusions, context and criticism.
- Take up literary or critical theories to investigate the effect of the text.
- Examine pressures put on characters and their effects on character identity.

#### **Write an essay analyzing authorial craft:**

- Notice how an author tends to write.
- Identify, argue, and analyze symbolism.
- Plan the author's craft essay.
- Frame essays with relevance and context: introductions and conclusions.
- Adopt an essayist's tone.

## Activities

### Students will participate in:

- Comprehension activities
- Whole group/small group discussions
- Note taking
- Grammar activities
- Vocabulary activities
- Socratic Discussions

## Methods of Assessment/Evaluation

### Students will complete:

- Reading Group Discussions
- Classwork/Independent Work
- Quizzes
- Tests
- Projects
- Essay
- Grammar Quizzes
- Vocabulary Quizzes
- Journal Responses
- Motif Project
- Characterization Chart

## Resources

### Suggested Resources:

- To Kill a Mockingbird: Harper Lee
- Dream Deferred: Langston Hughes
- A Modest Proposal: Jonathan Swift
- Harrison Bergeron: Kurt Vonnegut
- The Story of an Hour: Kate Chopin
- Video: FDR Nothing to Fear But Fear Itself 1933 Inaugural Address
- Article: "To Kill a Mockingbird: Film Study Guide": Frank Baker
- Video: To Kill a Mockingbird (1962)
- Movie: To Kill a Mockingbird
- Poem: "Those Winter Sundays": Robert Hayden
- Article: Discussing Sensitive Topics in the Classroom: Facing History and Ourselves

- Video: Harper Less: About the Documentary

## Grade 8 Reading Unit 5: Poetry/Shakespeare

**Content Area:** Language Arts

**Grade Level:** English Grade 8

### Summary and Rationale

Students will understand and appreciate the beauty, art, and discipline of poetry through close reading. Students will begin by reading and listening to poetry in order to identify the differences between and similarities of poetry and prose. Students will then determine the literal meaning of the poem before beginning to analyze the poem— deconstructing it to look for something different with each read through (poetic devices, elements of structure, sound techniques, clues to the poet's motivation, etc.) Students will learn to annotate the poem, making their analysis work visible on the page. Students will synthesize the individual elements of the poem that they analyzed in order to construct their own interpretation (or the poem's deeper meaning). Students will utilize their understanding of poetry to analyze sonnets written by Shakespeare.

### Recommended Pacing

May-June

### New Jersey Student Learning Standards

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W 8.4, W 8.5, W 8.6, W 8.9, W 8.10, RL.8.1, RL.8.2, RL.8.4, RL.8.5, RL.8.6, SL.8.1, SL.8.1, SL.8.1.a, SL.8.1.b, SL.8.1.c, SL.8.1.d SL.8.3, SL.8.4, L 8.1, L 8.2, L 8.3, L 8.4, L.8.4.bL 8.5, L 8.6

### Instructional Focus

#### Unit Enduring Understandings

- Effective readers use specific strategies (including rereading) to help them better understand and deepen their comprehension.
- Effective readers bring various experiences and prior knowledge to make meaning from a text.

- Poets often convey ideas indirectly.

## Unit Essential Questions

- How can I read and reread a poem until I know how it works - why it looks the way it does on the page, how each part makes sense with the whole poem, and how specific words and phrases in the poem mean more than they would in another context?
  - How can I read and re-read a poem to understand not just the literal words on the page, but what is symbolized or hinted at that points to more complex themes?
  - How can I use what I know about poets' techniques and goals to analyze the many ways that a poem works to get across complex ideas and emotions?
  - How can I read closely to analyze the voice of the speaker, thinking about how this affects the messages of the poem?
- How do poets use different structures, sound techniques, and figurative language to communicate an idea?
- How does the individual's schema influence the reader's interpretation of the poem?
- How does the style and point of view of the poet affect the reader's understanding of the text?

## Objectives

### Students will be able to:

- Reread to make connections and determine the deeper meaning of the poem.
- Write multiple poetic forms.
- Identify symbolism.
- Analyze authorial craft.
- Argue connections between poetry and political, social, and cultural movements.
- Perform poetry.

## Activities

### Students will participate in:

- Comprehension activities
- Whole group/small group discussions
- Note taking

- Grammar activities
- Vocabulary activities
- Socratic Discussions

## Methods of Assessment/Evaluation

### Students will complete:

- Writing on Demand - Analyzing a poem
- Reciting a poem
- Writing free verse poetry
- Poetry analysis
- Discussions
- Annotations

## Resources

### Suggested Resources:

- "For Some Slight I Can't Quite Recall," by Ross Gay (<http://poets.org/poetsorg/poem/some-slight-i-cant-quite-recall>)
- "Bringing My Son to the Police Station to Be Fingerprinted," by Shoshauna Shy (<http://www.loc.gov/poetry/180/068.html>)
- "Spring is like a perhaps hand," by EE Cummings (<http://www.pemhunter.com/poem/spring-is-like-a-perhaps-hand/>)
- "We Real Cool: The Pool Players. Seven at the Golden Shovel" by Gwendolyn Brooks (<https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/we-real-cool>)
- "Nikki-Rosa," by Nikki Giovanni (<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/177827>)
- "Knock, Knock" by Daniel Beatty
- "If I Should Have a Daughter" by Sarah Kay
- "Hands" by Sarah Kay
- "What Teachers Make" by Taylor Mali
- Additional Shakespeare works (sonnets and well known scenes from plays written in iambic pentameter)