

PART 4

EXPLAINING UNDERSTANDING

"But the Wild is the Wild, and motherhood is motherhood."

OBJECTIVE:

Students learn how to summarize and explain what they have learned from their reading, questioning, and analysis of texts. Students read and analyze three related texts.



ACTIVITIES

1- INTRODUCTION TO CULMINATING ACTIVITY

The teacher introduces the final culminating text-centered writing and comparative discussion.

2- READING AND DISCUSSING RELATED TEXTS

Students listen to three related texts and discuss them as a class.

3- QUESTIONING AND ANALYZING TEXTS INDEPENDENTLY

Students select (or are assigned) one of the texts to discuss with a small group and then analyze independently.

4- INDEPENDENT WRITING ACTIVITY

Students use their analysis to independently write a detail-based explanation of one of the texts.

ESTIMATED TIME: 3 days

MATERIALS:

Texts #1-9
Questioning Texts Tool
Analyzing Details Tool
Guiding Questions Handout



ALIGNMENT TO CCSS

TARGETED STANDARD(S): RI.6.1 RI.6.2 RI.6.6

RI.6.1: Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

RI.6.2: Determine a central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.

RI.6.6: Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and explain how it is conveyed in the text.

SUPPORTING STANDARD(S): RI.6.4 RI.6.10 W.6.2 W.6.9

RI.6.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings.

RI.6.10: By the end of the year, read and comprehend literary nonfiction in the grades 6–8 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.

W.6.2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

W.6.9: Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

≡ ACTIVITY 1: INTRODUCTION TO ≡ CULMINATING ACTIVITY

The teacher introduces the final culminating text-centered writing and comparative discussion.

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

The final two parts (4 and 5) of the unit are a two-stage culminating activity in which students first analyze and write about one of three related texts, then lead a comparative discussion about the three texts. In the first stage, students are introduced to the texts and choose one to read closely with a small, “expert” group. Building on their collaborative close reading, students independently analyze and write about their text. In the second stage of the culminating activity, students return to their small groups to discuss their writing and draft a question that compares their text to the other texts in the unit. Students then “jigsaw” to a new group and use their analysis, writing, and comparative question to facilitate and participate in a structured text-centered discussion with students who have analyzed the other two texts.

The culminating text-centered discussions could be given in an “academic panel” format. In this format, student groups have their discussions in front of the class (and invited community members) to simulate real-world and college panel discussions. See the description at the end of Part 5 for more details.

≡ ACTIVITY 2: READING AND DISCUSSING ≡ RELATED TEXTS

Students listen to three related texts and discuss them as a class.

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

- Read aloud the texts #7, #8, and #9. Alternatively, strong readers can be asked to read aloud.
- Lead a discussion of the students’ first impressions of the texts, using the Guiding Questions to help facilitate discussion.

≡ ACTIVITY 2: READING AND DISCUSSING ≡ RELATED TEXTS (CONT'D)

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

TEXTUAL NOTES

The three final texts continue topical strands that have been developed in previous texts, including pack behavior in hunting, wolf communication, the development of wolf pups, and the behavior of alphas within a wolf pack. Two of them are extensions of previous texts read by the entire class. Text #7 is a continuation of Text #5, also drawn from the "All About Wolves" page on the Isle Royale website; it focuses primarily on the details of how Isle Royale wolves hunt moose. Text #8 is a later chapter from *White Fang*, describing the lives of wolf pups. Both texts measure in the middle of the 6th grade band [around 900-1000L], with the London text being more challenging due to the intricacy of its description and, in some places, abstractness. Text #9 presents students with a new, and perhaps unfamiliar, text type – a scientific report, with an introduction, methodology section, and discussion of results (only one part of the study's results is excerpted here). At the upper end of the middle school text band [1300L+], the close reading of Text #9 is best suited for more advanced readers and students, particularly those interested in studying science or being a scientist in the future. It presents a hypothesis/explanation related to alpha wolf behavior that contrasts with what is presented in the Isle Royale materials and in the first London excerpt, and that connects more closely to the information/description of wolf family behavior in the second London excerpt.

The three texts offer very different reading experiences, which students can focus on as they compare them and develop conclusions about text types, reading closely, and how writers describe and explain wolf behavior. They also allow for connections to all previous texts read in the unit, while opening up the opportunity for each student to develop his/her own personal discoveries/conclusions about wolves and humans' understanding of and relationship to them.

ACTIVITY 3: QUESTIONING AND ANALYZING TEXTS INDEPENDENTLY

Students select (or are assigned) one of the texts to discuss with a small group and then analyze independently.

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

Students may be assigned a text based on their reading comprehension levels, interests, or developing skills (as demonstrated earlier in the unit), or they may be allowed to choose a text following their initial reading and small group discussion of the three. Either way, each student will be responsible for doing a close reading, questioning, analysis, and summary of one of the three related texts.

SMALL GROUP CLOSE READING USING THE QUESTIONING TEXTS TOOL

- Small “expert” groups read one of the texts collaboratively using the Questioning Texts Tool.
- Each group member fills in his/her own Questioning Texts Tool for their assigned text, and each develops a separate text-specific question through their discussion.

INDEPENDENT ANALYSIS USING THE ANALYZING DETAILS TOOL

- Students independently complete an Analyzing Texts Tool using a text-specific question (his/her own or one from another group member).
- Students might optionally return to their expert groups to discuss their analysis.

MODEL TEXT QUESTIONING SEQUENCE

Guiding Question(s) (for all three texts):

- 1- What is the author’s personal relationship to the topic or themes?
- 2- What do I learn about the topic as I read?
- 3- How do the ideas relate to what I already know?
- 4- How are the details I find related in ways that build ideas and themes?

Text-specific Question(s):

Text #7: "All About Wolves - Hunting Behavior," Wolves and Moose of Isle Royale website

- 1- What is the purpose for writing this explanation found on the Isle Royale website?
- 2- What specific details are included about how wolves work in packs to hunt moose? About how wolves "perceive their world" and use their senses to hunt for moose? About wolves’ activity levels and the energy they burn when hunting?
- 3- How do these details about wolf behavior connect to information from other texts in the unit?
- 4- After reading Texts #5 and #8, what picture of the life of Isle Royale wolves emerges? In what ways is it difficult? In what ways is it similar to or different from human life?
- 5- Do wolves as presented in this text seem more like the "good wolf" or the "bad wolf" from the Cherokee story? What details from the text support your answer?

ACTIVITY 3: QUESTIONING AND ANALYZING TEXTS INDEPENDENTLY (CONT'D)

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

MODEL TEXT QUESTIONING SEQUENCE

Guiding Question(s) (for all three texts):

- 1- What is the author's personal relationship to the topic or themes?
- 2- What do I learn about the topic as I read?
- 3- How do the ideas relate to what I already know?
- 4- How are the details I find related in ways that build ideas and themes?

Text-specific Question(s):

Text #8: Jack London, White Fang, Part II, Chapter III, "The Grey Pup"

- 1- What picture of the life of a young wolf pup does Jack London present? What might he want his readers to see or feel?
- 2- What details do we learn about the first few months of a wolf pup's life?
- 3- How do these details relate to information presented in other, more scientific texts?
- 4- How do the two Jack London excerpts, Texts #6 and #8, contrast in the picture they present of the life of the she-wolf, One Eye, and the pups? What do we learn happens to One-Eye at the end of Text #8, and how is this detail ironic with respect to what happens in Text #6?
- 5- Do wolves as presented in this text seem more like the "good wolf" or the "bad wolf" from the Cherokee story? What details from the text support your answer?

Text #9: "Alpha Status, Dominance, and Division of Labor in Wolf Packs," L. David Mech

- 1- In the first paragraph of the Methods section of this scientific report, what do we learn about the researcher, L. David Mech, and how/where he has studied wolves? What purpose for his investigation does he present in the last paragraph of the Introduction?
- 2- What details about how wolf packs have been traditionally viewed by scientists do we find in the first paragraph of the Introduction? What information in the paragraphs 2-4 suggests why this view could be limited or incorrect?
- 3- What conclusions does Mech draw about wolf pack behavior and how to explain "alpha status"?
- 4- How does Mech's theory about alpha wolf behavior contrast with information and descriptions in other texts in the unit? What does Mech suggest as another way to think about "alpha" behavior that connects wolves more closely to the behavior of a "human parent" or a "doe deer"?
- 5- Do wolves as presented in this text seem more like the "good wolf" or the "bad wolf" from the Cherokee story? What details from the text support your answer?



ACTIVITY 4: INDEPENDENT WRITING

Students use their analysis to independently write a detail-based explanation of one of the texts.

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

This final activity of Part 4 serves both as a more formal assessment of each student's demonstration of the skills focused on in the unit, and as a foundation for their planning in Part 5, where they will lead a discussion comparing their text to others read in the unit. Students will submit this writing exercise as part of their assessment in Part 5.

Students write a multi-paragraph explanation, using textual evidence that explains:

- ⇒ A central idea of the text and how it is developed across it
- ⇒ What the central idea demonstrates about the author's perspective on the topic
- ⇒ What they have come to understand about the topic from the text.



ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The multi-paragraph explanations students draft in Part 4 should be reviewed closely as evidence of their close reading skills (and, to a lesser extent, as a formative assessment of their explanatory writing skills). At this point, students should be able to:

- Describe accurately central ideas of a text
- Explain observations about the author's perspective
- Identify something they have learned from their reading that is clearly text-related
- Reference details related to each of these writing purposes.

Students who can do so are ready to lead discussions in Part 5. Students who have not yet been able to read and explain their understanding of their text successfully may need additional support before moving on to Part 5.