

PART 4

EXPLAINING UNDERSTANDING

"The worst has happened, or nearly the worst."

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.7.1 RI.7.2 RI.7.6

RI.7.1: Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

RI.7.2: Determine two or more central ideas in a text and analyze their development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.

RI.7.6: Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how the author distinguishes his or her position from that of others.

SUPPORTING STANDARD(S): RI.7.4 RI.7.10 W.7.2 W.7.9

RI.7.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone.

RI.7.10: 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.7.2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

W.7.9: 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.

TEXTUAL NOTES

The three texts are all accounts from explorers who raced to the South Pole in 1911: Roald Amundsen's after-the-fact recounting of his arrival at the Pole in December [#7] and two entries from Robert Scott's in-the-moment journal: one recounting his own, disappointing arrival in January, 1912 [#8], and the other his last entries before expiring in March, 1912 [#9]. All three texts should be accessible to students, with Amundsen's seeming the most complex and Scott's last entries the most austere - in sharp contrast to his more complex "Impressions" recounted in Text #2. Taken together, the three texts tell the story of how the race ended for each explorer, and also suggest both the extreme challenges and emotional moments they encountered. Each provides opportunities to read closely (and independently) for textual details, and illustrates how the author's perspective and situation when writing influence how he presents his account.

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 information/ideas are described in detail?
- 2- What is the author’s personal relationship to the topic or themes?
- 3- What does the text leave uncertain or unstated? Why?

Text-specific Question(s):

Roald Amundsen, The South Pole, Chapter XII "At the Pole", December 14, 1911

- 1- In paragraph 1, what details does Amundsen provide to suggest how challenging the final approach to the South Pole was? How do the details, and the mood, of paragraph 2 contrast with this opening description?
- 2- What do the details presented in paragraph 5 suggest about the moment of raising the first flag above the South Pole, and Amundsen's view of this historic event?
- 3- In paragraph 3, Amundsen says "Can anything more topsy-turvy be imagined?" What unstated ironies about his winning the race to the South Pole is he suggesting?

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

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

MODEL TEXT QUESTIONING SEQUENCE

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

- 1- What information/ideas are described in detail?
- 2- What is the author's personal relationship to the topic or themes?
- 3- What does the text leave uncertain or unstated? Why?

Text-specific Question(s):

Robert Falcon Scott, Scott's Last Expedition, January 16-18, 1912

- 1- Scott begins his January 16 entry by saying, "The worst has happened, or nearly the worst." What details does he present in this and the next entry that let us know what his party has discovered?
- 2- What perspective about the journey and emotions about its ending does Scott reveal in his January 17 entry when he says, "Great God! this is an awful place and terrible enough for us to have laboured to it without the reward of priority."?
- 3- When Scott lists the names of the five Norwegians he has found in the tent, what does he leave unsaid about his own party and their place in history?

Robert Falcon Scott, Scott's Last Expedition, March 16-29, 1912

- 1- What details recorded in Scott's journal suggest how desperate their situation was during the last weeks?
- 2- In his final entries, Scott's writing becomes very different from in his earlier entries (compare these to Text #2). How are the writing and its presentation of details different? What does this change in his writing style suggest about how his "personal relationship" to the experience has changed in his final days?
- 3- The details of Scott's final entries suggest that his party got within eleven miles of the supply depot before they perished. What does Scott not say about how this information might have made them feel? Why does this make his near-final words "the end cannot be far" seem very ironic?



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.