

PART 4

EXPLAINING UNDERSTANDING

“First step on the new soil”

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.



ALIGNMENT TO CCSS

TARGETED STANDARD(S): RI.8.1 RI.8.2 RI.8.6

RI.8.1: Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

RI.8.2: Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to supporting ideas; provide an objective summary of the text.

RI.8.6: Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how the author acknowledges and responds to conflicting evidence or viewpoints.

SUPPORTING STANDARD(S): RI.8.10 RI.8.4 W.8.2 W.8.9

RI.8.10: By the end of the year, read and comprehend literary nonfiction at the high end of the grades 6–8 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

RI.8.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including analogies or allusions to other texts.

W.8.2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

W.8.9: Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

ESTIMATED TIME: 3 days

MATERIALS:

Texts #1-9

Questioning Texts Tool

Analyzing Details Tool

Guiding Questions Handout

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 personal narratives written by individuals who either migrated to the United States (Mary Antin and Marie Ganz) or within the United States (Frederick Douglass). The texts are all rich with details and descriptive language, providing a fitting culmination to the unit’s focus and topic. However, they present varying degrees of reading challenges for students, ranging from:

- 1) the more straightforward (and lower difficulty level) Antin narrative (900L);
- 2) to the Ganz narrative, with its use of contrast and antithesis and more difficult language and sentence structure (1240L);
- 3) to the sophisticated, in terms of both ideas and language, Douglass piece (1300L).

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

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

TEXTUAL NOTES

"The Promised Land":

The Antin narrative presents a young girl's initial impressions of life in America, as she moves with her family from the Ellis Island pier, into New York City, and eventually to their new home in Boston and her first days of school. The first three paragraphs are primarily descriptive in nature, and provide students with an opportunity to extend the skills they have developed with the previous texts. The fourth and fifth paragraphs are more narrative and contemplative, presenting Mary's wonder at the "free" education she can receive in America. The final paragraph summarizes the "lessons and experiences" Antin and her siblings had to master.

"Rebels into Anarchy":

The Ganz narrative depicts a young immigrant girl's first impressions of the "home" she has come to in America. It provides opportunities for readers to think about descriptive detail and also to notice how the passage uses juxtaposition of characters' impressions and resulting antithesis to create poignancy. The first two paragraphs provide detailed description of the "two tiny rooms" and narration about how Marie Ganz has come to live there. Paragraphs 3-5 are her recollected narrative of her arrival "in the summer of 1896," "trudging along beside my father." The final section of the passage evokes the "hot and stuffy" nature of the family's new home, and the contrasting feelings of Ganz's mother and father about that home.

Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass:

Douglass' narrative about his escape from slavery to New York presents several shifts from previous texts read in the unit: it recounts a desperate migration within, rather than to, America, and it focuses on describing Douglass' thoughts and feelings rather than a physical setting. The passage uses figurative language and other stylistic devices to convey vividly what Douglass experienced in his own mind as he made his way to "freedom." In the first paragraph, Douglass explains his mixed emotions about his impending escape. In the second, he uses similes to describe his plight once he arrived in New York, a "free" state, and then strings together a long series of vivid descriptions to evoke what it felt like to be "a fugitive slave in a strange land."

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):

- 1-What is the author’s personal relationship to the topic?
- 2- What information/ideas are described in detail?
- 3- What do the author’s words cause me to see or feel?
- 4- How do details, information or ideas change across the text?

Text-specific Question(s):

“The Promised Land”:

- 1- Which details in the first three paragraphs suggest “newness” to Mary Antin, while being much more familiar to us as readers?
- 2- In paragraph 4, Antin says, “I was thrilled with what this freedom of education meant,” then in the next paragraph tells the story of her first day in school. How do the details of this story help explain Antin’s “thrill”?
- 3- In paragraph 6, what types of things does Antin tell us she had to learn? How does this string of details suggest what it meant for her to become an American?

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

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

MODEL TEXT QUESTIONING SEQUENCE

Guiding Question(s):

- 1- What is the author's personal relationship to the topic?
- 2- What information/ideas are described in detail?
- 3- What do the author's words cause me to see or feel?
- 4- How do details, information or ideas change across the text?

Text-specific Question(s):

"Rebels into Anarchy":

- 1- In the first three paragraphs, what details does Ganz present to describe her mixed impressions of her father as she is reunited with him in America?
- 2- When Ganz goes "groping into the past to see how far memory will carry me" in paragraphs 4 and 5, what details does she recall?
- 3- How is Ganz's mother's "disgust" and anguish, expressed at the start of paragraph 8, a reflection of the description that precedes it?
- 4- How does her reaction contrast with how she is described by Ganz, and with the author's characterization of her father? What is the impact of this juxtaposition and use of antithesis at the end of the passage?
- 5- What details, as they add up across the Ganz passage, likely cause the experience she narrates to have been such a "distinct memory" for her?

Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass:

- 1- In the first paragraph, Douglass contrasts his "trouble... within" and how things were going "smoothly... without." What does he mean when he uses the words "within" and "without"? What details about his thoughts and feelings does Douglass present to explain why his impending escape so troubled him "within"?
- 2- What details – and comparative images – does Douglass use at the start of paragraph 2 to explain his statement: "There I was in the midst of thousands, and yet a perfect stranger"?
- 3- In lines 37-8, Douglass says, "It was a most painful situation; and, to understand it, one must needs experience it, or imagine himself in similar circumstances." In the very long sentence that follows this statement, what vivid details does he present to help a reader understand or imagine how he felt?
- 4- At the end of the passage, Douglass suggests that he wants his readers to "know how to sympathize with, the toil-worn and whip-scarred fugitive slave." How do details, and connections among details that describe his mental state before and after his escape, evoke a sense of sympathy in a reader?

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.