MAKING
EVIDENCE-BASED CLAIMS

DEVELOPING CORE PROFICIENCIES
ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS / LITERACY UNIT

GRADE 10

MAKING EBCs ABOUT LITERARY TECHNIQUE

"Because I could not stop for Death"
Emily Dickinson

"Home Burial"
Robert Frost

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DEVELOPING CORE PROFICIENCIES SERIES

This unit is part of the Odell Education Literacy Instruction: Developing Core Proficiencies program, an integrated set of ELA units spanning grades 6-12. Funded by USNY Regents Research Fund, the program is comprised of a series of four units at each grade level that provide direct instruction on a set of literacy proficiencies at the heart of the CCSS.

Unit 1: Reading Closely for Textual Details
Unit 2: Making Evidence-Based Claims
Unit 3: Researching to Deepen Understanding
Unit 4: Building Evidence-Based Arguments

The Core Proficiencies units have been designed to be used in a variety of ways. They can be taught as short stand-alone units to introduce or develop key student proficiencies. Teachers can also integrate them into larger modules that build up to and around these proficiencies. Teachers can also apply the activity sequences and unit materials to different texts and topics. The materials have been intentionally designed for easy adaptation to new texts.

Unit materials available at
www.odelleducation.com

MAKING EVIDENCE-BASED CLAIMS

Making evidence-based claims about texts is a core literacy and critical thinking proficiency that lies at the heart of the CCSS. The skill consists of two parts. The first part is the ability to extract detailed information from texts and grasp how it is conveyed. Education and personal growth require real exposure to new information from a variety of media. Instruction should push students beyond general thematic understanding of texts into deep engagement with textual content and authorial craft.

The second half of the skill is the ability to make valid claims about the new information thus gleaned. This involves developing the capacity to analyze texts, connecting information in literal, inferential, and sometimes novel ways. Instruction should lead students to do more than simply restate the information they take in through close reading. Students should come to see themselves as creators of meaning as they engage with texts.

It is essential that students understand the importance and purpose of making evidence-based claims, which are at the center of many fields of study and productive civic life. We must help students become invested in developing their ability to explore the meaning of texts. Part of instruction should focus on teaching students how to understand and talk about their skills.

It is also important that students view claims as their own. They should see their interaction with texts as a personal investment in their learning. They are not simply reading texts to report information expected by their teachers, but should approach texts with their own authority and confidence to support their analysis

This unit is designed to cultivate in students the ability to make evidence-based claims in the realm of literary analysis.

HOW THIS UNIT IS STRUCTURED

The unit activities are organized into five parts, each associated with sequential portions of text. The parts build on each other and can each span a range of instructional time depending on scheduling and student ability.

The unit intentionally separates the development of critical reading skills from their full expression in writing. A sequence of tools isolates and supports the progressive development of the critical reading skills. Parts 1-2 focus on making evidence-based claims as readers. Part 3 focuses on preparing to express evidence-based claims by organizing evidence and thinking. Parts 4 and 5 focus on expressing evidence-based claims in writing.

This organization is designed to strengthen the precision of instruction and assessment, as well as to give teachers flexibility in their use of the unit.

The first activities of Parts 2-5 – which involve independently reading sections of the text – are designed as independent reading assignments. If scheduling and student ability do not support independent reading outside of class, these activities can be done in class at the beginning of each Part. Accordingly, they are listed both as an independent reading activity at the end of each part and as an activity beginning the sequence of the next part.

Alternate configurations of Part 5 are given in the detailed unit plan to provide multiple ways of structuring a summative assessment.

HOW THIS UNIT ALIGNS WITH CCSS FOR ELA/LITERACY

The primary CCSS alignment of the unit instruction is with **RL.1** and **W.9b** (*cite evidence to support analysis of explicit and inferential textual meaning*).

The evidence-based analysis of the text, including the text-dependent questions and the focus of the claims, involve **RL.2, RL.4** and **RL.5** (*analyze the way an author's choices concerning words and structure develop ideas and themes over the course of a text*).

The numerous paired activities and structured class discussions develop **SL.1** (*engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly*).

The evidence-based writing pieces involve **W.2** and **W.4** (*produce clear and coherent informative /explanatory texts in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience*).

HOW THIS UNIT ASSESSES STUDENT LEARNING

The unit's primary instructional focus is on making evidence-based claims as readers and writers. Parts 1-3 develop the reading skill. Activities are sequenced to build the skill from the ground up. A series of tools supports students in their progressive development of the skill. These tools structure and capture students' critical thinking at each developmental stage and are the primary method of formative assessment. They are specifically designed to give teachers the ability to assess student development of the reading skill without the influence of their writing abilities.

From the first activity on, students are introduced to and then use a set of criteria that describes the characteristics of an evidence-based claim. In pair work and class discussions, students use the first five of these criteria to discuss and evaluate evidence-based claims made by the teacher and their peers. Teachers use these same criteria to assess student claims presented on the tools from Parts 1-3.

As the instructional focus shifts to writing in Parts 4 and 5, so does the nature of the assessment. In these parts, teachers assess the student writing pieces. Students continue using tools as well, giving teachers clear and distinct evidence of both their reading and writing skills for evaluation. In Parts 4-5, students learn about and use six additional criteria for writing claims. Teachers apply these criteria in the formative assessment of students' written work, as well as the evaluation of their final evidence-based writing pieces.

In addition to reading and writing, the unit incorporates many structured collaborative activities to develop key speaking and listening proficiencies. Students and teachers use the Text-Centered Discussion Checklist to structure and evaluate participation in those discussions. Opportunities are also given for teachers to directly observe and evaluate student speaking and listening skills using the checklist.

Part 5 can be configured in multiple ways giving teachers the flexibility to structure a summative assessment suitable for their students.

HOW THIS UNIT TEACHES VOCABULARY

This unit draws on several strategies for teaching academic and disciplinary vocabulary. The primary strategy is the way critical disciplinary vocabulary and concepts are built into the instruction. Students are taught words like "symbolism, "perspective," "meter," "claim," "evidence," "reasoning," and "inference" through their explicit use in the activities. Students come to understand and use these words as they think about and evaluate their textual analysis and that of their peers.

The EBC Checklist plays a key role in this process. By the end of the unit, students will have developed deep conceptual knowledge of key vocabulary that they can transfer to a variety of academic and public contexts.

The texts and activities also provide many opportunities for text-based academic vocabulary instruction. Many activities focus directly on analyzing the way authors use language and key words to develop ideas and achieve specific purposes. The process of developing and evaluating claims supports the acquisition of these words and content knowledge.

HOW THIS UNIT MIGHT BE EMBEDDED IN CONTENT-BASED CURRICULUM

The unit is explicitly and intentionally framed as *skills-based instruction*. It is critical for students to understand that they are developing core literacy proficiencies that will enrich their academic and civic lives. The unit and activities should be framed for them as such. Nonetheless, the texts have been chosen, in part, for their rich content and cultural significance. They contain many important historical and contemporary ideas and themes. Teachers are encouraged to sequence the unit strategically within their curriculum and instructional plans, and to establish content connections that will be meaningful for students. This might involve connecting the unit to the study of topics or eras in social studies, related genres or voices in literature, or themes and guiding questions.

Teachers can also adapt the unit activities and materials to other fiction and non-fiction texts. The materials have been intentionally designed for easy adaptation to a variety of texts.

Whatever the curricular context established by the teacher, the central emphasis of the unit should, however, be on evidence-based, text-focused instruction.

HOW TO USE THESE MATERIALS

This unit is in the format of a **Compressed File**. Files are organized so you can easily browse through the materials and find everything you need to print or e-mail for each day.

The materials are organized into three folders:

UNIT PLAN

- Unit Plan
- Model Tools

The **model claims and tools** are meant only to illustrate the process, NOT to shape textual analysis. *It is essential that both teachers and students develop claims based on their own analysis and class discussion*. Teachers are encouraged to develop their own claims in the blank tools to use with students when modeling the process.

HANDOUTS

- Forming Evidence-Based Claims Handout
- Writing Evidence-Based Claims Handout
- Evidence-Based Claims Criteria Checklists I and II
- Evidence-Based Writing Rubric
- Text-Centered Discussion Checklist

TOOLS and **CHECKLISTS** have been created as *editable PDF forms.* With the free version of Adobe Reader, students and teachers are able to type in them and save their work for recording and e-mailing. This allows students and teachers to work either with paper and pencil or electronically according to their strengths and needs. It also allows teachers to collect and organize student work for evaluation and formative assessment.

TOOLS

- Forming Evidence-Based Claims
- Making Evidence-Based Claims
- Organizing Evidence-Based Claims
- Written Evidence-Based Claim

If you decide to **PRINT** materials, please note that you can print them at *actual size*, without enabling the auto-fit function. All materials can be printed either in color or in black and white.

UNIT OUTLINE

PART 1: UNDERSTANDING EVIDENCE-BASED CLAIMS

- The teacher presents the purpose of the unit and explains the skill of making EBCs.
- Students independently read part of the poem with a text-dependent question to guide them.

- Students follow along as they listen to the poem being read aloud and discuss a series of text-dependent questions.
- The teacher models a critical reading and thinking process for forming EBCs about texts.

PART 2: MAKING EVIDENCE-BASED CLAIMS

- Students independently read the rest of the poem and look for evidence to support a claim made by the teacher.
- Students follow along as they listen to the poem being read aloud and discuss a series of text-dependent questions.
- In pairs, students look for evidence to support claims made by the teacher.
- The class discusses evidence in support of claims found by student pairs.
- In pairs, students make an EBC of their own and present it to the class.

PART 3: ORGANIZING EVIDENCE-BASED CLAIMS

- Students independently read part of another poem and make an EBC.
- Students follow along as they listen to the poem being read aloud and discuss a series of text-dependent questions.
- The teacher models organizing evidence to develop and explain claims using student EBCs.
- In pairs, students develop a claim with multiple points and organize supporting evidence.
- The class discusses the EBCs developed by student pairs.

PART 4: WRITING EVIDENCE-BASED CLAIMS

- Students independently read the rest of the poem and develop an EBC.
- The teacher introduces and models writing EBCs using a claim from Part 3.
- In pairs, students write EBCs using one of their claims from Part 3.
- The class discusses the written EBCs of volunteer student pairs.
- The class discusses their new EBCs and students read aloud portions of the text.
- Students independently write EBCs.

PART 5: DEVELOPING EVIDENCE-BASED WRITING

- Students review the two poems and make a new EBC.
- The teacher analyzes volunteer student evidence-based writing from Part 4 and discusses developing global EBCs.
- Students discuss their new claims in pairs and then with the class.
- Students independently write a final evidence-based writing piece.
- The class discusses final evidence-based writing pieces of student volunteers.