

## PART 4

# EXPLAINING UNDERSTANDING

“lay down all my joys in this life”

### 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.11-12.1 RI.11-12.2 RI.11-12.6

RI.11-12.1: Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

RI.11-12.2: Determine two or more central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to provide a complex analysis; provide an objective summary of the text.

RI.11-12.6: Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective, analyzing how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness, or beauty of the text.

### SUPPORTING STANDARD(S): RI.11-12.10 RI.11-12.4 W.11-12.2 W.11-12.9

RI.11-12.10: By the end of grade 11, read and comprehend literary nonfiction in the grades 11–CCR text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range. By the end of grade 12, read and comprehend literary nonfiction at the high end of the grades 11–CCR text complexity band independently and proficiently.

RI.11-12.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term or terms over the course of a text.

W.11-12.2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

W.11-12.9: 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 personal narratives written by individuals who experienced the Civil War conflict, though in different ways. Sullivan Ballou (1250L) writes of his willingness to sacrifice everything he loves to help preserve the Union, while Jefferson Davis’ (1450L) letter gives a glimpse at his remorse of the necessity to secede from the United States. Finally, Harriet Jacobs gives an account of the difficult choices slaves faced during life before the Emancipation Proclamation. The three pieces all coincide well with the texts in Parts 1-3, offering differing literary styles, points of view, as well as varying degrees of difficulty.

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

### INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

#### TEXTUAL NOTES

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Sullivan Ballou to Sarah Ballou:  
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In the first narrative, Union soldier Sullivan Ballou, an attorney from Rhode Island, writes an emotional and coherent letter to his wife stating his determination to fight to keep the "American Civilization" intact, i.e. maintain the Union. The final two paragraphs continue to use strong metaphors and similes to detail Ballou's intense feelings for his family.

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Letter to Franklin Pierce:  
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In the second text, Jefferson Davis, the soon to be President of the Confederate States, writes a letter to ex-President Franklin Pierce explaining the reasons for Mississippi's secession from the Union. In the first three paragraphs, Davis expresses the difficulty of leaving the Union for which his "Father bled" and contemplates the pre-war relations between North and South, hinting at slavery through subtle language. The language he uses also points to an internal conflict as he fears the prospect of war, yet will respond to the call to duty.

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"Incidents in the life of a Slave Girl":  
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Wanting to inform Northerners of the harsh realities of slavery in the South, Jacobs' account of her experiences offers a critical perspective from a slave around the time of the Civil War. The selected excerpt narrates a conversation between "Ben" (Jacobs concealed the real identity of the characters) who has just fought with his master and has made the difficult decision to flee to the North where "poverty and hardships with freedom" are preferable to slavery. The dialogue provides a departure from the informative texts the students have been reading and is very accessible to students (670L); however, it depicts some of the wrenching decisions slaves went through before the Emancipation Proclamation.

## ≡ 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 relationship to the topic or themes?
- 2- What do the author's words cause me to see or feel?
- 3- What do I learn about the topic as I read?
- 4- How is the text organized?

Text-specific Question(s):

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Sullivan Ballou to Sarah Ballou:  
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- 1- What feelings do the images in Ballou's opening lines evoke?
- 2- In paragraph 2, Ballou talks about a debt. What details in the text hint at who Ballou is talking about?
- 3- In line 11, Ballou talks about his love for Sarah. How do these feelings compare to the ones he has for the "Union"?
- 4- What words and phrases help identify the tone of voice in paragraphs 3 and 4?

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

## INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

### MODEL TEXT QUESTIONING SEQUENCE

Guiding Question(s):

- 1- What is the author's relationship to the topic or themes?
- 2- What do the author's words cause me to see or feel?
- 3- What do I learn about the topic as I read?
- 4- How is the text organized?

Text-specific Question(s):

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Letter to Franklin Pierce:  
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- 1- What does the phrase "closes my connection with the United States" signal in line 4?
- 2- What significance does his father's blood have for Davis' "troubled time"?
- 3- How does the way Davis phrases the lines 7 and 8 - "Those who have driven her to this alternative..." - reveal his perspective on the conflict?

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"Incidents in the life of a Slave Girl":  
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- 1- What does Jacobs' description of her mistress' accusation tell us about her situation?
- 2- What impact does the use of the word "yolk" in line 23 have on the passage? Where else does Jacobs use metaphor to help describe the situation of the slave?
- 3- Benjamin says he is going "to the North" in line 20. What textual details provide the reader an understanding of what the North represented to Benjamin?



## 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.