

ACTIVITY 3: EXPLAINING AND COMPARING TEXTS (CONT'D)

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

WRITING COMPARATIVE ANALYSES

- Students draw from their notes, tools, annotated texts, and sentences from earlier activities to construct a paragraph answering their comparative question. Paragraphs should include:
 - ⇒ The comparative question
 - ⇒ 1-2 sentences explaining their analysis of Text #5 and key supporting details
 - ⇒ 1-2 sentences explaining their analysis of Text #6 and key supporting details
 - ⇒ 1-2 sentences explaining a connection they have made between the two texts that answers their comparative question
- Students construct the paragraph by:
 - ⇒ Introducing the topic, in this case the comparison made between the texts
 - ⇒ Organizing their information to clearly and logically express their ideas
 - ⇒ Developing the topic with appropriate supporting details
 - ⇒ Linking sentences with appropriate transitional words and phrases to clarify relationships and establish coherence
 - ⇒ Using precise language and an academic (formal) style of writing.
- In small groups, students read and peer-review their comparative paragraphs
 - ⇒ Prior to submission, an optional revision may be asked of the students based on peer feedback.
- Students submit paragraphs and their supporting materials.

ACTIVITY 4: INDEPENDENT READING

Students independently read texts using a guiding question.

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

This reading, which sets up Parts 4 and 5 of the unit, can be done as homework or in class, with more or less scaffolding depending on how students have been doing in previous reading experiences. On their own, students read Texts # 7, 8, & 9 - topic-related texts all written in a similar genre/mode, using Guiding Questions to set up a Questioning Texts Tool. At this point, students do not need to study any of the three texts, rather simply be familiar with them, so they can prepare themselves for analyzing one of the texts through close reading in Part 4 and for leading a comparative discussion in Part 5.

ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES

In Part 3, students will have:

- Completed a Questioning Texts Tool for text #6 individually and in groups
- Completed an Analyzing Texts Tool based on their own text-specific questions
- Taken part in a group discussion about connections between texts #5 and #6
- Written a paragraph explaining their analysis of Texts #5 and #6 and making connections between them.

Use these work samples to both assess how the class is doing overall in the skills of close reading, questioning, analyzing details, comparing, and explaining, and to help determine which of the three texts students might be assigned to read and analyze for Parts 4 and 5 of the unit. Thus, their paragraphs potentially serve both as formative and diagnostic assessment. As before, student discussions provide opportunities to “listen in” and informally assess their speaking and listening skills, in anticipation of Part 5.

PART 4

EXPLAINING UNDERSTANDING

“Whence, then do my errors arrive?”

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 also lead to an optional in group presentation event. In this event, student groups share what they have learned about the topic to 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 used for this section represent diverse but connected perspectives on human nature. Each is a personal narrative from a renowned, modern western philosopher – a 21st century African-American (Cornel West), a 19th century German (Friedrich Nietzsche), and a 17th century Frenchman (Rene Descartes). Humanity’s quest for meaning, purpose, and virtue is complicated not only because of our limited understanding of truth, but also because of the inadequate, incomplete, and ultimately unverifiable paradigms and systems we deploy to describe and pursue it. In addition to dealing with profoundly challenging philosophical questions from an array of viewpoints, each text uses diverse literary styles.

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

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

TEXTUAL NOTES

"The Examined Life:"

Situating his monologue within an historically and philosophically diverse context, Cornel West argues that the discipline of philosophy requires the courage to look at our finitude and fallibility; ultimately asserting that Philosophy, itself, is learning how to die. Our finite and fallible existence, if it is to attain some sense of truth, must give a voice to our human suffering. This does not exclude the existence of an absolute truth, however; it is just that our systems for drawing conclusions about it are diverse (science vs. religion) and certainly incomplete and therefore in need of revision and mystery.

"Genealogy of Morals:"

Nietzsche denies moral duality (good and evil) and contends that humanity's struggle for truth is misguided because we have created a false goal, namely, a perfect God. We have rejected our true nature – the "inveterate animal instincts" – as faulty and unredeemable, aspiring instead to a complete, albeit false, opposite construction of Self in God.

"Meditations on First Philosophy:"

After arguing for and identifying that God is the source of absolute truth (and does not desire to deceive humanity), Descartes explains that humanity is indifferent to what is good because we do not understand it, and therefore make mistakes (sins). If we truly understood the truth about what is good, we would choose to do it.

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 words or phrases are critical for my understanding of the text?
- 2- What words and phrases are powerful or unique
- 3- What is the author saying about the topic?
- 4- How does the author's language show his perspective?

Text-specific Question(s):

"The Examined Life:"

- 1- According to West, what is the relationship between “death,” “finitude,” and “fallibility?”
- 2- Why is mystery an important concept for West?

"Genealogy of Morals:"

- 1- What does Nietzsche mean by God as the “last of the opposites.”
- 2- How does the phrase “cry love ring out, the cry of rapt longing, of redemption in love” express Nietzsche's view of human nature?

"Meditations on First Philosophy:"

- 1- According to Descartes, in what ways does indifference diminish our liberty?
- 2- According to Descartes, if our will and understanding are equally perfect (from God), why does the will have greater capacity?



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.