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# READING CLOSELY FOR TEXTUAL DETAILS

DEVELOPING CORE PROFICIENCIES  
ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS / LITERACY UNIT

GRADE 6

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"The wolf you feed"



## 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](http://www.odelleducation.com)



## READING CLOSELY FOR TEXTUAL DETAILS

Becoming literate involves developing habits and proficiencies associated with many reading purposes, from reading for pleasure to preparing for high-stakes business meetings. This unit develops students' abilities to read closely for textual details—a proficiency essential for a variety of reading purposes and contexts. Attending to and analyzing details are essential skills for accessing meaning, allowing texts to inform our understanding and enrich our lives.

Rather than simply ask students to read closely, this unit instructs them in a process for doing so. The activities lay out a process for approaching, questioning and analyzing texts that helps readers focus on key textual characteristics and ideas. Just as experts in any field access deep understanding by knowing what to look for in their particular fields, expert readers know the questions to ask of texts in order to guide them to deep meaning. The framework of questioning presented in this

unit takes the invisible process expert readers have internalized and makes it explicit – to support teachers and students as they develop proficiency in reading text closely.

Proficient readers can also explain and share the discoveries they have made through reading and analyzing a text. Developing evidence-based explanations is essential for clarifying and deepening one's own understanding as well as the foundation for participation in academic and civic life. This unit integrates the development of explanatory communication skills into the close reading process. Students learn to explain their thinking and link it with textual evidence both in discussion and writing. The unit culminates in a structured text-centered discussion in which students examine discoveries they have made about an important topic, by explaining and comparing their textual analyses with their peers.



## HOW THIS UNIT IS STRUCTURED

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

Part 1 introduces students to the idea of reading closely for details through an examination of a range of text types. Part 2 introduces students to a particular process for close reading that involves questioning the text—at first generally and then in text-specific ways—to help them focus on important textual ideas and characteristics. Part 3 develops student proficiency by analyzing textual details for making comparisons across texts. Parts 4 and 5 develop students’ abilities to express their analysis, first through writing text-based explanations in Part 4 and then, in Part 5, through facilitating and participating in text-centered discussions.

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 final activities in Parts 1-4 are designed as independent student tasks that can be done either in class or as homework.

Part 5 includes an optional extended assessment activity involving the creating of a student portfolio of work and a reflective essay on their experience throughout the unit.

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



## HOW THIS UNIT TEACHES WRITING

Communicating understanding effectively is an essential part of the close reading process. And while this unit focuses primarily on reading proficiencies, writing from textual evidence plays an important role in most of the activities. The nature of the writing instruction at this stage in the Developing Core Proficiencies Series is rooted in some core principles. First, strong writing flows from deep comprehension of a text or topic. Many deficiencies in writing are the result of shallow or uniformed critical thinking. The unit writing activities are linked closely to student reading in ways that help them both develop and express their emerging understanding of the evidence at hand. Students are continually asked to explain their thinking about texts in their writing. Developing this ability is fundamental to supporting students as they craft extended pieces of writing in later contexts.

The writing activities—including the writing students complete on the tools—are all very limited in scope. In most cases students write only one or two sentences and at most a few short paragraphs. This in NO way suggests that they are limited in importance. The limited scope intentionally allows teachers and students to focus on building the ability to accurately incorporate textual evidence into their communication, and include effective word choice, punctuation, and syntax that are appropriate to the audience and task.



## HOW THIS UNIT TEACHES VOCABULARY

This unit draws on a variety of 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 “analyze,” “perspective,” “questioning,” and “criteria” 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 handouts and tools play 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 academic vocabulary instruction. Many of the activities focus directly on analyzing the way authors use language and key words to develop ideas and achieve specific purposes.

The sequence of topical texts also builds vocabulary knowledge and connections, supporting both textual comprehension and vocabulary acquisition. The texts are formatted with integrated tools for vocabulary development. Each page includes editable glossaries where teachers and students can choose various words to define. Some words have been pre-selected and glossed. Teachers may choose to differentiate vocabulary support by student.

## INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORTS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS AND STUDENTS READING BELOW GRADE LEVEL

This unit is intentionally designed so that all students engage directly with a series of texts that progress in grade level complexity and activities as the unit unfolds. Appropriate scaffolding is built into the unit design, activity sequence, and tools to make instruction comprehensible to students – especially those who are English Language Learners or are reading well below grade level at the start of the unit – so that they directly experience the complexity of the texts. The unit actively supports these students through explicit instruction of skills and strategies, the building of background knowledge, a progression of increasing text complexity, a focus on student-developed questions, and instructional strategies associated with modeling, grouping, and graphic organizers. Instruction follows a progression that moves from scaffolding and support to independent application.

Among the supports for English Language Learners and below grade-level readers integrated into the units are:

**Unit Design and Instructional Sequence:** By design, students begin learning to “read closely” by first encountering visual images, which they scan for details, and then multi-media texts that reinforce the skills of identifying details and making text-based observations from those details. Thus, before they ever encounter print texts of grade level complexity, students begin to develop skills and strategies through visual learning experiences. They then learn to transfer these skills to the reading of more complex texts. The text sequences in this Reading Closely unit are also set up as a “staircase of complexity,” so that students move from more accessible texts that help them build background knowledge to more challenging texts that they analyze for perspective and use of language. The sequence of texts culminates in a final, three-text set, which presents students with a range of text complexity, based on both quantitative and qualitative

measures. Students are expected to become an “expert” for only one of these texts, providing teachers with an opportunity to differentiate content (text selection) based on students’ reading levels or English language mastery.

**Short Texts, Focused Reading:** Most of the texts in the unit are relatively short in length, allowing students to focus on individual paragraphs and sentences as they learn to read closely and derive meaning. Text-dependent questions included in the instructional notes further focus students’ reading to important or more challenging sections of text.

**Read Alouds and Modeling:** At key parts in the instruction, teachers read text aloud so that students can listen to the cadence and structure of texts while also following along themselves. By listening to a proficient reader, students pick up on natural pauses and pronunciation of words. Teachers also model “think alouds,” wherein they discuss what they visualize and think as they read. Teachers thus model reading proficiently, and also model using the skills and graphic organizer tools that help students learn to read closely. Students see the tools and skills modeled before they apply them, first in pairs or small groups, then independently.

**Guiding Question Framework:** The units break the reading process down into manageable steps that are increasingly complex. For example, rather than simply asking students to paraphrase what they have read, the unit asks students to start by writing down details they have found in the text related to a guiding question like “What words or phrases stand out to me as I read?” Already equipped with details they have written down, students are then asked to discuss these details. Only after having had these two opportunities to interact with the text and peers do students attempt to paraphrase what they have read.

## INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORTS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS AND STUDENTS READING BELOW GRADE LEVEL

**Graphic Organizers:** The unit’s instructional tools provide students with a precise and guided manner for reading texts closely. These tools help break down the complex reading processes - processes that proficient readers automatically use - into clear, visual organizers. The tools, including the Questioning Texts and Analyzing Details tools, guide students to focus specifically on details they identify in the texts. Visually, they help students understand the relationships among those details and the connections and observations they make from the text.

**Reading Teams:** Students are given chances to read both in groups and individually. Teachers can group students in various ways, sometimes by reading abilities, sometimes by interests or target text, sometimes heterogeneously to pair less able readers with more advanced readers. By reading in teams, students practice talking about texts in a structured supported context.

**Academic Vocabulary:** While leaving many decisions about the teaching of vocabulary to the teacher, the unit includes glossaries for each text and sets up the learning of vocabulary in a text-based context. More generally, the Guiding Questions Handout utilizes vocabulary related to reading skills that students can apply while both reading and discussing texts. Additionally, many of the Guiding Questions direct students to identify and think about key words in the texts. Teachers of English Language Learners and below grade-level readers are encouraged to use additional vocabulary building strategies such as Word Walls, whereby students can visually reference the meaning of key words in the classroom as they read and discuss texts.

## SOURCES OF THIS UNIT INSTRUCTION

The instructional ideas contained in this unit are presented as our contribution to the national effort to prepare all US secondary students for college and career readiness. We intend that these principles, activities, tools, and strategies will be taken up, adapted, and improved upon by the educators who use them. While we take full responsibility for the content of the unit, and recognize that mentioning our key sources in no way implies their endorsement of that content,

we would like to acknowledge some important influences and reference points for this work: the students and colleagues who contributed to the classroom experiences of our development team; the Common Core Standards; the PARCC ELA Curriculum Frameworks; the Tri-State Quality Review ELA Rubric; and the research on text complexity and text-dependent questioning from Student Achievement Partners.

## ≡ HOW THIS UNIT ALIGNS WITH CCSS FOR ≡ ELA/LITERACY

The instructional focus of this unit is on learning to read text closely: attending to details, language, and perspective; posing and responding to text-dependent questions; and analyzing connections and relationships to deepen understanding. The unit also emphasizes informational text, while incorporating literary nonfiction and other literary texts. Accordingly, the primary alignment of the unit – the targeted CCSS – are **RI.1**, **RI.2**, and **RI.6** (*read closely to determine literal and inferential meaning, determine central ideas and supporting details, and assess author’s point of view – while attending to and citing specific textual evidence*). Students develop these skills throughout the unit through direct instruction and guided practice, and they are assessed continuously through activities, tools, and written products.

As students develop these primary targeted reading skills, they are also practicing, and eventually demonstrating, their abilities to engage in text-centered discussions. Thus, **SL.1** (*engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively*) is also an emerging targeted CCSS as the unit progresses, and is directly assessed in the final, discussion-based activity of Part 5.

As students develop these primary targeted CCSS skill sets, they also practice and use related reading and writing skills from supporting CCSS. Thus, in Part 2, they begin to focus on **RI.4** (*interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text*) and in Part 3 on **RI.9** (analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics), with **RI.9** formatively assessed in Part 5.

Students focus on crafting effective evidence-based writing, working from titles and paraphrases to summary sentences and explanatory paragraphs. Thus, **W.2** (*write explanatory texts to convey ideas and information clearly and accurately*) and **W.9** (*draw evidence from texts to support analysis*) are also introduced and practiced in the unit, as is **W.4** (*produce clear and coherent writing*).

Finally, because students are expected to read and analyze a grade-level text somewhat independently in Parts 4 and 5, the unit provides initial evidence of how well students can meet the expectations of **RI.10** (*read and comprehend complex texts independently and proficiently*).



# 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 AND TEXTS

- Unit Plan
- Models
- Texts

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



**TEXTS** are formatted with spacing and margins to support **teacher and student annotation**. Students should be encouraged to mark up their texts (electronically or in print) as they search for details. **Paragraphs and lines are numbered** for referencing in writing and discussion. **Editable glossaries** are provided at the bottom of each page. While some words have already been bolded and glossed, teachers are encouraged to use the editable features for choosing words they wish to focus on or gloss, and to differentiate word support for their students.

## HANDOUTS

- Guiding Questions Handout
- Reading Closely Checklist
- Text-Centered Discussion Checklist

## TOOLS

- Analyzing Details
- Questioning Texts



**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.

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 CLOSE READING

- The teacher presents an overview of the unit, discussing the purposes and elements of close reading.
- Students are oriented to the idea of attending to details through examining images.
- Students use guiding questions to look closely for details in a text.
- Students use guiding questions to look closely for details in a multi-media text and write a few sentences explaining something they have learned.
- Students use guiding questions to independently explore a multi-media website.

## PART 2: QUESTIONING TEXTS

- The teacher models how to use the Questioning Texts Tool to guide a process for close reading, and then pairs practice on a text they have read.
- Students listen to a new text and use the Questioning Texts Tool to guide their reading.
- The teacher guides the class through an analysis of the text using the Analyzing Details Tool.
- Students develop their own text-specific questions with which to analyze the text.
- Students write 1-3 sentences explaining their analysis of the text and list supporting textual details.

## PART 3: ANALYZING DETAILS

- Students listen to and then closely read and analyze a new text.
- The teacher guides and supports students in a comparative discussion of the texts.
- Students develop a comparative question in groups and individually write a paragraph answering their question.
- Students independently read texts using a guiding question.

## PART 4: EXPLAINING UNDERSTANDING

- The teacher introduces the final culminating text-centered writing and comparative discussion.
- Students listen to three related texts and discuss them as a class.
- Students select (or are assigned) one of the texts to discuss with a small group and then analyze independently.
- Students use their analysis to independently write a detail-based explanation of one of the texts.

## PART 5: DISCUSSING IDEAS

- The teacher leads students in a reflective conversation about productive, text-centered discussions.
- Students discuss their analysis in groups and independently prepare for leading a text-centered discussion by crafting a comparative text-dependent question.
- Students lead and participate in text-centered discussions with other students who have analyzed different texts.

# READING CLOSELY GRADES 6 UNIT TEXTS

AUTHOR	DATE	PUBLISHER	L	NOTES
<b>Text #1: Representations of Wolves (Images)</b>				
Various	NA	Various: Public Domain	NA	Wolves represented through art, illustration and photography.
<b>Text #2: A Brief History of Wolves in the United States (Informational Text)</b>				
Cornelia N. Hutt	NA	Defenders of Wildlife	1230L	Overview of wolves in North America including how they have been seen and affected by various groups of humans.
<b>Text #3: Two Wolves (Video)</b>				
Dave Owens	2008	Dave Owens	NA	A Cherokee story of wisdom; the words of a Cherokee grandfather talking to his grandson.
<b>Text #4: Living with Wolves and Lobos of the South West (Websites)</b>				
NA	NA	Living With Wolves and Mexican Wolves.org	NA	Informational websites about wolves--one on the history of the Mexican Gray Wolf and one about wolves living on a preserve.
<b>Text #5: All About Wolves: Pack Behavior (Informational Text)</b>				
John Vucetich and Rolf Peterson	2012	The Wolves and Moose of Isle Royale Project	1200L	Discussion of the social behavior of wolves.
<b>Text #6: White Fang. [Pt. II Ch. I] (Fictional Narrative)</b>				
Jack London	1906	Macmillan	1020L	Excerpt focusing on the running of a wolf pack and the role of the dominant female wolf within the pack.
<b>Text #7: All About Wolves : Hunting Behavior (Informational Text)</b>				
John Vucetich and Rolf Peterson	2012	The Wolves and Moose of Isle Royale Project	990L	An overview of the Isle of Royal Project as well as a factual description of a wolf hunt.
<b>Text #8: White Fang. [Pt. II Ch. III] (Fictional Narrative)</b>				
Jack London	1906	Macmillan	1020L	Excerpt describing the first sensory experiences of a wolf pup and the role of the wolf parents.
<b>Text #9: Alpha Status, Dominance, and Division of Labor in Wolf Packs (Scientific Study)</b>				
David. L. Mech	1999	Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center	1300L	Report discussing observations of wolves in the wild and the issues of studying wolves in their natural habitat.
<b>Extended Reading: (Various)</b>				
Various	NA	Various	NA	Links to extension texts exploring various aspects of wolves and human perception of them.

## PART 1

# UNDERSTANDING CLOSE READING

## "there are two wolves inside me"

### OBJECTIVE:

Students learn what it means to read a text closely by attending to and analyzing textual details. Students analyze visual-based texts.

## ACTIVITIES

### 1- INTRODUCTION TO UNIT

The teacher presents an overview of the unit, discussing the purposes and elements of close reading.

### 2- LOOKING CLOSELY FOR DETAILS

Students are oriented to the idea of attending to details through examining images.

### 3- READING CLOSELY FOR DETAILS

Students use guiding questions to look closely for details in a text.

### 4- ATTENDING TO DETAILS IN MULTI-MEDIA

Students use guiding questions to look closely for details in a multi-media text and write a few sentences explaining something they have learned.

### 5- INDEPENDENT READING/RESEARCHING ACTIVITY

Students use guiding questions to independently explore a multi-media website.

**ESTIMATED TIME:** 3-4 days

### MATERIALS:

Texts #1-4  
Guiding Questions Handout  
Reading Closely Checklist

## ALIGNMENT TO CCSS

### TARGETED STANDARD(S): RI.6.1 RI.6.2

RI.6.1: Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

RI.6.2: Determine a central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.

### SUPPORTING STANDARD(S): RI.6.4

RI.6.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings.



# ACTIVITY 1: INTRODUCTION TO UNIT

The teacher presents an overview of the unit, discussing the purposes and elements of close reading.

## INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

Introduce the central purpose of the unit – to develop the skills and habits of a close reader:

- 1) Initially approaching and surveying a text
- 2) Using questions to examine the text’s topic, information, and structure
- 3) Questioning further to investigate the text
- 4) Analyzing key details and language to deepen understanding
- 5) Explaining what one has come to understand as a reader

## INTRODUCTORY ANALOGY

To introduce the unit and establish a link between questioning, close examination, and deepening understanding, you might use an analogy from another field that requires careful study and analysis. For example:

- Compare the process of “close reading” to the analytical processes used by other experts, such as musicians, scientists, or detectives;
- Present a CSI video that demonstrates how a detective asks herself questions when first approaching a crime scene.

Use any of these analogies to illustrate how experts in various fields are able to analyze and understand artistic works, phenomena, places, events or situations because their training focuses them on details that the uninitiated do not typically notice. This training often involves a set of *guiding questions* that experts ask themselves to direct their attention to key elements of their fields of study.

A musician might ask herself, “How do the sounds of the various instruments work together?” A crime scene investigator might ask, “What evidence suggests how the perpetrator came and went from the scene?” These more general questions lead the experts to then ask specific questions directly related to the object of investigation. For example, the general question concerning the perpetrator’s coming and going might lead the investigator to notice a set of muddy footprints. She then might ask, “What are the size and type of the shoes that left these muddy footprints?” Experts ask these questions so that they clearly understand what they are studying and can clearly communicate their understanding to others.

## LINK THE ANALOGY TO QUESTIONING SKILLS

- Using the introductory analogy as a reference point, explain that effective readers also use guiding questions to help them look for evidence in texts.
- Introduce the Guiding Questions (GQ) Handout, orienting students to both the structure of the document and the questions in each row, and explaining that these are a general set of guiding questions that can direct their attention to key evidence in texts as they read.

## PREVIEW THE TEXTS AND CHECKLISTS

- Show students the Text Set Table indicating that there are connections among the texts but do not stipulate what those connections are.
- Let them know they will be reading and studying those texts with increasing independence, and will be expected to lead a group discussion about one of the final three texts.
- Introduce the Reading Closely Checklist and the Text-Centered Discussions (TCD) Checklist and explain that they will be working on these skills throughout the unit.

# ACTIVITY 2: LOOKING CLOSELY FOR DETAILS

Students are oriented to the idea of attending to details through examining images.

## INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

### TEXTUAL NOTES

Introduce students to the set of photographs they will study, but provide minimal contextual information.

If you want digital images, the photos can be found online using the links in the text set. (Note: this activity can be done using a printed copy of the visual image(s), a projection in the room, or on computers, allowing students literally to zoom closer and note specific details.)

### EXAMINE IMAGES IN SMALL GROUPS

- Students examine the image(s) in small groups and answer the question “What stands out to me as I examine this image?”
- In their groups, students find several details that stand out to them, with one group member serving as a recorder of all their details.
- Groups may consult the GQ Handout for further questions to help them focus on details.
- Groups discuss what the details suggest to them and identify any new questions they have after examining and discussing the details.

### CLASS DISCUSSION & SUMMARIZING ACTIVITY

- Lead a discussion on what the groups noticed about the images and the questions they had
- Discuss how these questions are “text-specific” – questions that:
  - ⇒ Emerge from looking closely at the image
  - ⇒ Prompt them to look for more details
  - ⇒ Lead to a greater understanding of the image.
- Students list three details they think are “key” for them in understanding something that is going on in one of the images.

### MODEL TEXT QUESTIONING SEQUENCE

Guiding Question(s):

- 1- What is this image mainly about?
- 2- What stands out to me as I examine this image?

Text-specific Question(s):

- 1-In the second image, how is the wolf depicted compared to the other figures?
- 2-In the third image, what do the position and stance of the wolves indicate? What does the condition of the surrounding snow suggest?
- 3-What are the men doing to the wolf in the fourth image?

*NOTE: Throughout the unit Model text-specific questions associated with Guiding Questions have been provided in the material. These questions are included to illustrate the process and possibilities; teachers are encouraged to develop their own text-specific questions based on their own analysis.*

- Students write a caption that summarizes what they think the image is about and share and compare their captions/titles, noting the details that have led to what they have written.

At this stage, definitive answers do not need to be established for questions students pose. The purpose of the exercise is for students to get a sense of how close examination of texts leads to questions which in turn lead to further examination of textual detail, and an ability to communicate meaning to others.

# ACTIVITY 3: READING CLOSELY FOR DETAILS

Students use guiding questions to look closely for details in a text.

## INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

### TEXTUAL NOTES

Text #2, the first print text students encounter, is borrowed from a Kids Planet World Wide Wolves curriculum website, which also includes many other useful texts, question sets, and cross-curricular activities about wolves. The text measures on the high end of the 6th grade text band [at 1230L] but is straightforward and accessible in its informational format. It provides an overview of the history of wolves in the US, from their importance to Native American cultures to their current controversial status as an endangered species. Searching for details in this text should provide useful background for students.

### READ TEXT #2 ALOUD

- Direct students to the questions listed under “Topic, Information, and Ideas” in the Questioning Texts row of the GQ Handout.
- As you read the passage aloud, students think about the question:  
⇒ “What information or ideas does this text present?”
- Ask students to record/share their responses to the question, making sure that students refer to the text to support their responses.

### INDEPENDENT READING

- Before students re-read the passage independently, direct students to the questions listed under “Language” in the Questioning Texts row of the GQ Handout.
- Students think about the question:  
⇒ “What words or phrases stand out to me as I read?”
- While reading independently, students mark details they notice (electronically or with a pencil/highlighter).

### CLASS REVIEW & PARAPHRASING

- As a class, students:  
⇒ Compare the details they have noticed and marked.  
⇒ Discuss what the details suggest to them.  
⇒ Identify any new questions they have after examining and discussing the details.
- Introduce the concept of a “paraphrase,” and model paraphrasing a sentence from the passage.
- Individually, students draft a paraphrase of one of the details that stood out to them.

### MODEL TEXT QUESTIONING SEQUENCE

Guiding Question(s):

- 1- What information or ideas does the text present?
- 2- What do I learn about the topic as I read?

Text-specific Question(s):

- 1- What details and examples are presented in paragraphs 3 & 4 to explain the ways in which Native American cultures “revered the wolf”?
- 2- What details and examples are presented in paragraphs 5 & 6 to explain the contrasting views of European settlers who had “fear of wolves”?

## ACTIVITY 4: ATTENDING TO DETAILS IN MULTI-MEDIA

Students use guiding questions to look closely for details in a multi-media text and write a few sentences explaining something they have learned.

### INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

#### TEXTUAL NOTES

Text #3 is a short YouTube video by David Owens that uses images, sounds, music, narration and text to dramatize a Cherokee story about the “two wolves” that lie within us – and sets up the idea of looking at wolves from different perspectives that runs throughout the unit. The video presents a shorter version of the legend, in which a grandfather talks to his grandson about the good and bad wolves that fight for dominance within humans. It provides opportunities for students to attend to textual details while viewing, notably the qualities associated with each of the wolves.

#### Extended Exercises:

There are many text versions of the Cherokee legend available that highlight different aspects of the legend. Teachers can search online or in their libraries and select one (or more) that they judge appropriate for their students. An interesting exercise is to have students first watch the video closely, then read a text version, look for new details, and contrast how they present the story differently.

Finally, if you want to continue the discussion of how differently Native and European cultures have viewed the wolf, see the supplementary text from the How Stuff Works website on werewolves, which [at 1100L] presents an accessible and interesting explanation of such topics as Werewolf Origins, Transformations, etc., and which makes the following interesting observation: “Teenagers and young adults can identify with the idea of sudden, seemingly inexplicable changes in their skin, hair and body. And just about everyone has experienced the struggle to keep control of emotions like anger and frustration.”

#### VIEW THE VIDEO

- Students view the video with no additional context provided, other than what they bring from studying the previous texts.
- Students think about a guiding question (i.e. “What information or ideas does this text present?”) as they watch the video.

#### CLASS DISCUSSION AND RE-VIEW OF VIDEO

- Before re-viewing the video, briefly discuss students’ initial observations.
- Use some of students’ observations to craft a specific question about the video to guide the re-view. Alternatively, additional guiding questions can be used.
- Students record key details in a two-column notes format.
  - ⇒ Note details sequentially in the first column of their notes, then highlight details they see as important, and explain (in the second column) why they see those selected details as important.

# ACTIVITY 4: ATTENDING TO DETAILS IN MULTI-MEDIA (CONT'D)

## INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

### SMALL GROUPS WRITE ABOUT THE VIDEO

- Student small groups discuss the details they have selected, and their thinking about the importance of those details in helping them understand the video.
- Students share their notes and collaboratively write a few sentences explaining something they have learned from the video, referring to key details that have led to their understanding.
- Volunteers from each group read their sentences to the class.
- As a class compare what the groups saw, including how clearly and accurately they are able to communicate their understanding
- Reflect on the “close reading” experience of watching a video, using the Reading Closely Checklist to guide the reflective discussion. This reflective discussion is an opportunity for students to self-assess their ability to read closely and identify areas where they can improve as a reader over the course of this unit.

### MODEL TEXT QUESTIONING SEQUENCE

#### Guiding Question(s):

- 1- What is this text mainly about?
- 2- What ideas stand out to me as I read/view?

#### Text-specific Question(s):

- 1- What human qualities does the grandfather link to the “evil and ugly” wolf (1:50 into the video)? Why?
- 2- What human qualities does the grandfather link to the “beautiful and good” wolf (2:20 into the video)? Why?
- 3- What is the meaning of the grandfather’s answer to the question: “Which wolf will win?”
- 4- How do the details of the boy’s experience in the print version of the legend change our understanding of the story and its last line?



## ACTIVITY 5: INDEPENDENT READING/ RESEARCH

Students use guiding questions to independently explore a multi-media website.

### INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

This activity is an optional extension of Part 1 where students can enrich their skills of looking for details with web-based text. It is recommended for students who have access to a computer either as an individual or in groups. Accessing an informational site can not only help students apply close reading skills in the context of Internet research, but also enrich their understanding of the topic and other texts they will encounter in the unit. Students might be expected to develop deeper understanding of a part of the website through close reading and viewing, and to bring details and information they have found back to a small group discussion.

#### TEXTUAL NOTES

There are many excellent websites that present information about wolves and allow students to navigate and read to learn more about the unit's topic. The Living With Wolves website is from an organization that supports wolf survival, and provides many links that allow students to discover more about wolves, including photos, videos, etc. The Lobos of the Southwest website discusses restoration efforts for the Mexican Gray Wolf. Students might explore one aspect of this (or another) site and then report back to their peers.

#### MODEL TEXT QUESTIONING SEQUENCE

Guiding Question(s):

1- What do I learn about the topic as I read (explore the website)?

Text-specific Question(s):

1- What interesting details, examples, or ideas can I find that relate to the other texts we are studying?

## ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Students' captions and paraphrases for Texts #1 & 2 can be reviewed to see if they are able to generalize from details, and might provide a pre-assessment of skills before students read and analyze more challenging passages in Parts 2-5. These short, informal writing samples should also be reviewed for evidence that students are able to clearly explain their thinking about the texts they are reading. The reflective conversation using the Reading Closely Checklist is an opportunity for students to self-assess. Student conversations in small groups, particularly in relation to Text #3 (the video), also can provide rich initial evidence of their emerging thinking, and of the skills related to Text-Centered Discussions that they bring into the unit, since they will be demonstrating those discussion skills in Part 5.

## PART 2

# QUESTIONING TEXTS

"a complex web of social relationships"

### OBJECTIVE:

Students learn to use questions to guide their approach to, reading, and deeper analysis of texts. Students read and analyze informational texts.



## ACTIVITIES

### 1- HOW SKILLFUL READERS APPROACH TEXTS

The teacher models how to use the Questioning Texts Tool to guide a process for close reading, and then pairs practice on a text they have read.

### 2- APPROACHING A NEW TEXT

Students listen to a new text and use the Questioning Texts Tool to guide their reading.

### 3- ANALYZING TEXT WITH TEXT-SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

The teacher guides the class through an analysis of the text using the Analyzing Details Tool.

### 4- POSING TEXT-SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

Students develop their own text-specific questions with which to analyze the text.

### 5- INDEPENDENT WRITING ACTIVITY

Students write 1-3 sentences explaining their analysis of the text and list supporting textual details.

**ESTIMATED TIME:** 3 days

### MATERIALS:

Texts #1-5  
Questioning Texts Tool  
Analyzing Details Tool  
Reading Closely Checklist  
Guiding Questions Handout



## ALIGNMENT TO CCSS

**TARGETED STANDARD(S):** RI.6.1 RI.6.2

RI.6.1: Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

RI.6.2: Determine a central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.

**SUPPORTING STANDARD(S):** RI.6.4

RI.6.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings.

# ACTIVITY 1: HOW SKILLFUL READERS APPROACH TEXTS

The teacher models how to use the Questioning Texts Tool to guide a process for close reading, and then pairs practice on a text they have read.

## QUESTIONING TEXTS TOOL

The **QUESTIONING TEXTS TOOL** supports students in a process for close reading. The tool prompts students to record and organize basic information about a text and to focus on their reading purposes. It provides a place for recording guiding questions to help them read closely for details and text-specific questions they have come to in their reading.

## INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

### MODEL THE TOOL

Begin by modeling the Questioning Texts Tool, using Text #2:

- Think-aloud and talk through what you record in each Approaching the Text box.
- Select one or two questions to focus on from the Guiding Questions Handout.
- Re-read through the text, searching for details related to your guiding question. Model marking and annotating the text.
- Frame a new, text-specific question that the guiding question draws out of the passage.

### TOOL PRACTICE IN PAIRS

- Student pairs continue examining Text #2 with the Questioning Text Tool.
- Have student pairs use a *different* guiding question as a lens for examination and come up with related text-specific questions.
- The key skill to work on is having students frame a good, text-specific question that emerges after students have used the guiding question to identify important information in the text.



## ACTIVITY 2: APPROACHING A NEW TEXT

Students listen to a new text and use the Questioning Texts Tool to guide their reading.

### INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

#### INTRODUCE AND READ TEXT #5 ALOUD

Text #5 is a related but more challenging text. Provide minimal context about the passage before students encounter it. First have them listen to a reading of the text, asking them to concentrate on the author's message, tone, and use of language.

#### TEXTUAL NOTES

Text #5 is from the Wolves & Moose of Isle Royale website, a site that presents information from five decades of studying wolves on a wilderness island in Lake Superior. This text (which is the first part of the "All About Wolves" overview, the second part of which is used for Text #7) presents a description/explanation of the family and pack behavior of the Isle Royale wolves, based on observations of scientists who have studied them. It is somewhat conversational in tone, with short paragraphs, and [at 990L] should be accessible and interesting to all students as an example of science-based explanatory text. Students should work through the text, breaking it into chunks for close reading. Make sure they attend to the information about wolf pups that is presented early in the passage (and that will be important later in reading Text #8).

#### STUDENTS USE THE QUESTIONING TEXTS TOOL

- Students independently complete a Questioning Texts Tool – but do not yet record a text-specific question in the last row.
- Provide the guiding questions students will use, or have them select questions from the handout
- Emphasize questions related to language use and meaning, having students pay attention to and highlight words and phrases that are critical for understanding the passage and may also be less familiar to them.
- Focus on academic vocabulary – and its relationship to textual meaning.

#### READ TEXT #5 IN PAIRS

- Students look for details related to their guiding question.
- Students work in pairs to come up with text-specific questions to put in the final row of the Questioning Texts Tool.
- Students share their text-specific questions with the class, discussing and refining them as a class.

#### MODEL TEXT QUESTIONING SEQUENCE

Guiding Question(s):

1- What information/ideas are presented at the beginning of the text?

Text-based Question(s):

1- In the first three paragraphs of the Observations, what important details do we learn about Isle Royale wolf pups in their first year of life?

# ACTIVITY 3: ANALYZING TEXT WITH TEXT-SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

The teacher guides the class through an analysis of the text using the Analyzing Details Tool.

## ANALYZING DETAILS TOOL

The **ANALYZING DETAILS TOOL** also supports students in a process for close reading. The tool begins with a place to record their self-generated (or teacher-provided) text-specific question that they have come to through a guiding question. The tool prompts students to re-read the text marking and annotating details related to their question. Students then review their details and select those most relevant to their question. Students then analyze and make connections among those details to answer their question and deepen their understanding.

## INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

### MODEL THE TOOL

- Guide the class through the tool identifying your reading purpose and using a text-specific question that emerged from class discussion. The tool can also be used with guiding questions or with text-specific questions you provide to students.
- Read and annotate the text actively, marking, highlighting, or flagging details that are related to the reading purpose and question.
- Review the details you have marked, looking for “key” details, words, and phrases that relate to your reading purpose and question, and that convey or support a central idea.
- Record 3 of these key details/phrases from the text in the “Selecting Details” section of the tool, indicating the source/location in the “reference” section.
- Analyze each detail and record your thinking.
- Connect the details by writing a sentence based on your analysis.
- Have students all fill in their own tool with the information developed as a class. This allows students to get a feel for using the tool and provides them with analysis and models in their personal notebooks.

### TEXTUAL NOTES

Students can be given any of the paragraph sets that follow to read for details about such topics as alpha wolf behavior, wolves’ movement through their territories, wolf communication, comparisons to humans, etc.

### MODEL TEXT QUESTIONING SEQUENCE

Guiding Question(s):  
What do I learn about the topic as I read?  
How do the ideas relate to what I already know?

Text-based Question(s):  
In paragraphs 7-10, what do we learn about the behavior of “alphas”?  
How does what I learn about “alphas” relate to what I’ve read/found in the other texts of the unit?

# ACTIVITY 4: POSING TEXT-DEPENDENT QUESTIONS

Students develop their own text-specific questions with which to analyze the text.

## INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

### STUDENTS USE THE ANALYZING DETAILS TOOL

- Students begin by confirming or revising their text-specific question at the bottom of the Questioning Texts Tool for Text #5. (This might be done in small groups.)  
⇒ Some questions may be literal –scaffold students’ efforts to pose a question that causes them to re-examine textual details and discover something new about the text.
- Students transfer their question to the Analyzing Details Tool.
- Students annotate their texts by highlighting/marketing all the details they feel are relevant to their question.
- Students select three details to analyze, copying them and referencing them in their tool.
- Students analyze the details, recording their thinking.
- Students connect the details, writing a sentence or two explaining their thinking.
- Students share their findings in a group discussion, using their tools to guide their conversations, and reflect as a group on their process of reading closely, using the Reading Closely Checklist as a framework for reflection.

### MODEL TEXT QUESTIONING SEQUENCE

Guiding Question(s):

1- How are the details I find related in ways that build ideas and themes?

Text-based Question(s):

1- What details in “All About Wolves” suggest ways in which wolves and humans are similar?  
What details suggest ways in which wolf behavior and human behavior are different?



## ACTIVITY 5: INDEPENDENT WRITING

Students write 1-3 sentences explaining their analysis of the text and list supporting textual details.

### INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

In Part 4 of the unit, students will be developing and practicing the skills of writing a detail-based explanation of a text they have read. In this activity, introduce the idea of what a text-based explanation entails, possibly modeling one for Text #2. Ask students to work from their Analyzing Details Tool completed in Activity 4 and to write several clear, coherent, and complete sentences that explain something from their analysis of Text #5, making sure to reference key details they have identified. Connect this writing activity to skills students have been working on with their earlier paraphrasing activities.



## ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES

At the end of Part 2, students will have:

- Completed a Questioning Texts Tool for Text #2
- Completed a Questioning Texts Tool for Text #5
- Annotated their texts to highlight details related to their text questioning
- Completed an Analyzing Texts Tool for Text #5 both as a class and independently
- Written an explanation of their analysis of the text, including supporting details
- Engaged in group and class discussions

The primary focus of evaluation at this stage should be on student ability to use questioning to focus their annotation and selection of details. Examine student Questioning Texts Tool to evaluate the formation of their text-specific questions and their relationship to the guiding questions. Examine their annotated texts and Analyzing Details Tool to evaluate the relevance of their selected details and their recorded thinking and connections. Evaluate the tools for evidence of students' reading and thinking; examine the short written explanations for their developing writing skills, paying attention to use of evidence and to word choice, punctuation, and grammar.

## PART 3

# ANALYZING DETAILS

"the tragedy of the natural world that was tragedy only to those that died"

### OBJECTIVE:

Students learn to analyze textual detail as a key to discovering meaning.  
Students read, analyze, and compare texts.



## ACTIVITIES

### 1- ANALYZING TEXTUAL DETAIL

Students listen to and then closely read and analyze a new text.

### 2- ANALYZING DETAILS ACROSS TEXTS

The teacher guides and supports students in a comparative discussion of the texts.

### 3- EXPLAINING AND COMPARING TEXTS

Student groups develop a comparative question and individually write a paragraph using their question.

### 4- INDEPENDENT READING ACTIVITY

Students independently read texts using a guiding question.

**ESTIMATED TIME:** 3 days

### MATERIALS:

Texts #1-6  
Questioning Texts Tool  
Analyzing Details Tool  
Reading Closely Checklist  
Guiding Questions Handout



## ALIGNMENT TO CCSS

**TARGETED STANDARD(S):** RI.6.1 RI.6.2 RI.6.6 RI.6.9 RL.6.1 RL.6.2 RL.6.6 RL.6.9

RI.6.1: Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

RI.6.2: Determine a central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.

RI.6.6: Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and explain how it is conveyed in the text.

RI.6.9: Compare and contrast one author's presentation of events with that of another.

RL.6.1: Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

RL.6.2: Determine a theme or central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.

RL.6.6: Explain how an author develops the point of view of the narrator or speaker in a text.

RL.6.9: Compare and contrast texts in different forms or genres in terms of their approaches to similar themes and topics.

**SUPPORTING STANDARD(S):** RI.6.4

RI.6.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings.





# ACTIVITY 1: ANALYZING TEXTUAL DETAIL

Students listen to and then closely read and analyze a new text.

## INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

### INTRODUCE AND READ TEXT #6 ALOUD

Students now engage a new text that presents a different point of view on the topic. As before, students listen to the text with no initial context provided other than what they have already learned from their study of previous, related texts.

### INDEPENDENT READING

- Students complete the first parts of the Questioning Texts Tool, selecting Guiding Questions that relate to the *author's perspective*.
- Students read the text using their Guiding Questions to focus them on relevant details they can question further.

### CLASS DISCUSSION

- Lead a discussion of the text focusing on difficult sections and key academic vocabulary.
- Students should draw on details they found related to their Guiding Questions in discussion.
- Have students develop text-specific questions about key details that emerge in discussion.

### RE-READING TO ANALYZE DETAILS

- Students work in groups to hone text-specific questions.
- Students use their question to analyze the text with the Analyzing Details Tool.

### CLASS DISCUSSION

- Discuss the connections students have made in a final class discussion of Text #6.

### TEXTUAL NOTES

Text #6 is an excerpt from the open source edition of Jack London's famous novel *White Fang*. "The Battle of the Fangs" describes in vivid detail a violent encounter among four wolves traveling in a pack (two of whom will become the parents of the novel's main character); it connects directly with Text #8, a later chapter from the novel. The passage offers a challenging reading experience for students due to its descriptive language, but measures at a level [1020L] in the middle of the 6th grade text band. It also presents an interesting contrast to Text #5, allowing students to analyze differences in the ways wolf pack behavior are presented, and ultimately differences between informational and literary text. Because of the density of the description, student groups might be given shorter excerpts to read closely and analyze for details, reporting what they have discovered back to the class.

### MODEL TEXT QUESTIONING SEQUENCE

Guiding Question(s):

- 1- What words or phrases are powerful or unique?
- 2- What do the author's words cause me to see or feel?

Text-specific Question(s):

- 1- In the first six paragraphs, what details are presented to describe each of the wolves in the pack: the she-wolf, the large grey wolf, the one-eyed wolf, and the three-year old? What do these details tell us about the pack and its behavior?
- 2- What details does London present to illustrate his statement that, "The battle began fairly, but it did not end fairly"? What does his description of the battle cause us to see and feel?
- 3- What does the phrase "the tragedy of the natural world that was tragedy only to those that died" mean in this story? What seems to be Jack London's view of the wolves' behavior he describes?

## ACTIVITY 2: ANALYZING DETAILS ACROSS TEXTS

The teacher guides and supports students in a comparative discussion of the texts.

### INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

#### CLASS DISCUSSION

- Students use their notes and tools from texts #5 and #6 to discuss how each author's use of language reflects his or her perspective on the subject.
- Ask students to present evidence from the text to support their assertions, and to connect their comments to the ideas that others have shared.
- Have students take notes and annotate their text during the conversation, capturing what peers say, how their ideas are changing, or connections/ differences between texts.

#### TEXTUAL NOTES

The Isle Royale and White Fang excerpts offer a variety of opportunities for comparison: between fictional and nonfictional writing, around the common thread of pack behavior in wolves, and/or between the two authors' perspectives on their subjects and use of language to convey those perspectives. In particular, the texts illustrate how two very different kinds of texts – one scientific and one fictional – use details to describe animal behavior, with one presenting an observation-based scientific explanation of the behavior, and the other intent on dramatizing that behavior in vivid detail.

#### MODEL TEXT QUESTIONING SEQUENCE

Guiding Question(s):

- 1- What is the author's personal relationship to the topic or themes?
- 2- In what ways do the authors' different purposes and perspectives influence their presentation of details and ideas?

Text-specific Question(s):

- 1- In presenting a wolf's point of view, "All About Wolves" states that, "Communication and intelligence are needed to know who my friends and enemies are, where they are, and what may be their intentions." How does this observation relate to the details of the actions (and the wolf characters' thoughts) that are dramatized in Jack London's story?
- 2- Find another statement from "All About Wolves." Connect this statement to something that is described in the Jack London description of the wolf pack. How are the two passages similar and different?

## ACTIVITY 3: EXPLAINING AND COMPARING TEXTS

Student groups develop a comparative question and individually write a paragraph using their question.

### INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

#### SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS

- Students work in groups using their analyses of Texts #5 and #6 to come up with a comparative question.
- Support student groups as they develop their questions.

## 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

"But the Wild is the Wild, and motherhood is motherhood."

### 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.6.1      RI.6.2      RI.6.6

RI.6.1: Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

RI.6.2: Determine a central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.

RI.6.6: Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and explain how it is conveyed in the text.

**SUPPORTING STANDARD(S):** RI.6.4      RI.6.10      W.6.2      W.6.9

RI.6.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings.

RI.6.10: 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.6.2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

W.6.9: 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.

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

### INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

#### TEXTUAL NOTES

The three final texts continue topical strands that have been developed in previous texts, including pack behavior in hunting, wolf communication, the development of wolf pups, and the behavior of alphas within a wolf pack. Two of them are extensions of previous texts read by the entire class. Text #7 is a continuation of Text #5, also drawn from the "All About Wolves" page on the Isle Royale website; it focuses primarily on the details of how Isle Royale wolves hunt moose. Text #8 is a later chapter from *White Fang*, describing the lives of wolf pups. Both texts measure in the middle of the 6th grade band [around 900-1000L], with the London text being more challenging due to the intricacy of its description and, in some places, abstractness. Text #9 presents students with a new, and perhaps unfamiliar, text type – a scientific report, with an introduction, methodology section, and discussion of results (only one part of the study's results is excerpted here). At the upper end of the middle school text band [1300L+], the close reading of Text #9 is best suited for more advanced readers and students, particularly those interested in studying science or being a scientist in the future. It presents a hypothesis/explanation related to alpha wolf behavior that contrasts with what is presented in the Isle Royale materials and in the first London excerpt, and that connects more closely to the information/description of wolf family behavior in the second London excerpt.

The three texts offer very different reading experiences, which students can focus on as they compare them and develop conclusions about text types, reading closely, and how writers describe and explain wolf behavior. They also allow for connections to all previous texts read in the unit, while opening up the opportunity for each student to develop his/her own personal discoveries/conclusions about wolves and humans' understanding of and relationship to them.

## 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 is the author’s personal relationship to the topic or themes?
- 2- What do I learn about the topic as I read?
- 3- How do the ideas relate to what I already know?
- 4- How are the details I find related in ways that build ideas and themes?

Text-specific Question(s):

Text #7: "All About Wolves - Hunting Behavior," Wolves and Moose of Isle Royale website

- 1- What is the purpose for writing this explanation found on the Isle Royale website?
- 2- What specific details are included about how wolves work in packs to hunt moose? About how wolves "perceive their world" and use their senses to hunt for moose? About wolves' activity levels and the energy they burn when hunting?
- 3- How do these details about wolf behavior connect to information from other texts in the unit?
- 4- After reading Texts #5 and #8, what picture of the life of Isle Royale wolves emerges? In what ways is it difficult? In what ways is it similar to or different from human life?
- 5- Do wolves as presented in this text seem more like the "good wolf" or the "bad wolf" from the Cherokee story? What details from the text support your answer?

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

## INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

### MODEL TEXT QUESTIONING SEQUENCE

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

- 1- What is the author's personal relationship to the topic or themes?
- 2- What do I learn about the topic as I read?
- 3- How do the ideas relate to what I already know?
- 4- How are the details I find related in ways that build ideas and themes?

Text-specific Question(s):

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Text #8: Jack London, White Fang, Part II, Chapter III, "The Grey Pup"  
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- 1- What picture of the life of a young wolf pup does Jack London present? What might he want his readers to see or feel?
- 2- What details do we learn about the first few months of a wolf pup's life?
- 3- How do these details relate to information presented in other, more scientific texts?
- 4- How do the two Jack London excerpts, Texts #6 and #8, contrast in the picture they present of the life of the she-wolf, One Eye, and the pups? What do we learn happens to One-Eye at the end of Text #8, and how is this detail ironic with respect to what happens in Text #6?
- 5- Do wolves as presented in this text seem more like the "good wolf" or the "bad wolf" from the Cherokee story? What details from the text support your answer?

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Text #9: "Alpha Status, Dominance, and Division of Labor in Wolf Packs," L. David Mech  
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- 1- In the first paragraph of the Methods section of this scientific report, what do we learn about the researcher, L. David Mech, and how/where he has studied wolves? What purpose for his investigation does he present in the last paragraph of the Introduction?
- 2- What details about how wolf packs have been traditionally viewed by scientists do we find in the first paragraph of the Introduction? What information in the paragraphs 2-4 suggests why this view could be limited or incorrect?
- 3- What conclusions does Mech draw about wolf pack behavior and how to explain "alpha status"?
- 4- How does Mech's theory about alpha wolf behavior contrast with information and descriptions in other texts in the unit? What does Mech suggest as another way to think about "alpha" behavior that connects wolves more closely to the behavior of a "human parent" or a "doe deer"?
- 5- Do wolves as presented in this text seem more like the "good wolf" or the "bad wolf" from the Cherokee story? What details from the text support your answer?





## 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.

## PART 5

# DISCUSSING IDEAS

"The prevailing view of a wolf pack is that of a group of individuals ever vying for dominance."

### OBJECTIVE:

Students learn the characteristics of an effective text-based discussion and demonstrate skills in leading and participating in one.



## ACTIVITIES

### 1- UNDERSTANDING TEXT-CENTERED DISCUSSIONS

The teacher leads students in a reflective conversation about productive, text-centered discussions.

### 2- IDENTIFYING AND ORGANIZING IDEAS

Students discuss their analysis in groups and independently prepare for leading a text-centered discussion by crafting a comparative text-dependent question.

### 3- LEADING A TEXT-CENTERED DISCUSSION

Students lead and participate in text-centered discussions with other students who have analyzed different texts.

**ESTIMATED TIME:** 3 days

### MATERIALS:

Texts #1-9  
Questioning Texts Tool  
Analyzing Details Tool  
TCD Checklist



## ALIGNMENT TO CCSS

### TARGETED STANDARD(S): SL.6.1

SL.6.1: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 6 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

### SUPPORTING STANDARD(S): RI.6.10

W.6.2

W.6.4

W.6.9

RI.6.10: 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.6.2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

W.6.4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

W.6.9: Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

## ACTIVITY 1: UNDERSTANDING TEXT-CENTERED DISCUSSIONS

The teacher leads students in a reflective conversation about productive, text-centered discussions.

### INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

Throughout the unit, students have informally practiced the skills and behaviors used in text-centered discussions without formal instruction related to Speaking and Listening CCSS SL.1. Now present students with the TCD Checklist, a framework that outlines those skills.

- Read through the Checklist asking students to reflect on their performance for each criterion in the small group discussions throughout the unit.
- Have students refer to specific moments (or evidence) from previous small group discussions as examples of when they demonstrated – or didn't demonstrate – the criteria.
- Students fill out the checklist, indicating which skills they have demonstrated in small-group and class activities, noting specific examples in the "Comments" section.
- Students identify skills/behaviors they want to work on in this last part of the unit, as they prepare for and participate in their culminating text-centered discussions.

## ACTIVITY 2: IDENTIFYING AND ORGANIZING IDEAS

Students discuss their text explanations in groups and independently prepare for leading a text-centered discussion by crafting a comparative text-dependent question.

### INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

Students prepare for their culminating demonstration of the unit where they will explain a central idea of their text, identify something they have learned from reading their text (in the context of the other texts of the unit), and pose a comparative text-dependent question to facilitate a text-based discussion. The key to this activity is that each student is encouraged to come up with an individual insight or observation that has sprung from reading and studying texts throughout the unit. For some students, this could be a more literal discovery or comparison, for others an inference supported by the texts, and for others still, an evidence-based claim. Students' discoveries need to be text-based and connected to a text-dependent question, but do not need to be too carefully structured around a particular theme, idea, or detail.

#### EXPERT GROUP DISCUSSIONS

- Students review each other's explanations in text-based expert groups for accuracy and use of details and compare the observations/discoveries they have made about their common text.
- Students discuss their text in relationship to texts #5 & #6, and to the other texts of the unit.
- Use the Text-Centered Discussion Checklist to help guide their discussion.

#### DEVELOP A COMPARITIVE QUESTION INDEPENDENTLY

- Students independently develop a text-dependent question that is based in their text but connects it to other texts.
- This question will be used to set up discussion when they join a new group in Activity 3.
- Depending on student ability, teachers might choose to model a comparative question and/or work individually with some students to help them develop their own.

## ACTIVITY 3: LEADING A TEXT-CENTERED DISCUSSION

Students lead and participate in a text-centered discussion with two other students who have analyzed different texts.

### INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

In this activity, students “jigsaw” to groups of three (or alternately six depending on class size) so that each of the final three texts is represented in the group by at least one text “expert”.

In the discussion, each student (or student pair):

- Shares their explanations of a central idea of the text:
  - ⇒ Pointing out key details to the other students in their group
  - ⇒ Explaining their analysis of the author’s perspective
  - ⇒ Pointing out key words that indicate the author’s perspective
- Once each student has shared his/her analysis, they each take turns posing their comparative question and facilitating the discussion. As they facilitate, they should:
  - ⇒ Ask the other participants to reference the texts in their comments
  - ⇒ Share the understanding that has emerged for them, connecting it to and deepening it with comments from the others
  - ⇒ Direct the group to re-read key portions of the texts to support discussion
- Finally, each triad group summarizes its discussion for the class, sharing questions, observations, and key textual details that they have identified and discussed.

## OPTIONAL CLASS PRESENTATION OF LEARNING

One way to make the final small group discussions lead to more of a real-world and college-level task is to use them as preparation for a class presentation of learning. In this exercise, students would develop a presentation to other teachers, community members and parents to share what they have learned about the topic, drawing on their analysis and fielding questions from the audience. This approach simulates the types of experiences students will have in college by requiring them to experience a public speaking scenario. Inviting real observers into your classroom will lead to an increase in the depth of student preparation in Parts 4 and 5. It also enhances the focus students give to their text-centered discussion skills as well as work on their formal presentation skills.



## ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The culminating assessment activity of the unit involves participating in and leading a text-centered discussion, through which students can demonstrate both their developing skills of close reading, analysis, and questioning as well as their emerging discussion skills. As such, the activity provides both summative assessment for learning within the unit and pre-/formative assessment to inform instruction in future units. To capture evidence, listen in on group conversations and have students self and peer assess using the TCD Checklist. If more formal evidence is needed, students can compile an optional collection of evidence that includes a reflective narrative (see below), or you can record video of student conversations and review them later.



## OPTIONAL – COLLECTION OF EVIDENCE

To extend assessment within this final activity, students could compile a collection of evidence that reflects what they have learned in the unit. The collection could include a:

- written explanation of their final focus text with the tools that have informed and supported that analysis
- comparative text-dependent question for their discussion group, and some reflection about what happened when the group discussed their question
- self-assessment of skills they have demonstrated as close readers and as group members, using the Reading Closely and TCD Checklists to identify and explain their strengths as well as areas they intend to focus on in further work
- personal narrative in which they “tell the story” of what they have experienced, discovered, and learned within the unit, including a reflective summary of their reading experience for one or more of the texts

The student collection of evidence can be used for evaluation of learning in the unit, but will probably be most valuable as a formative assessment to help the teacher, and student, know what to work on in future units.