

THE COUNCIL OF CHIEF STATE SCHOOL OFFICERS

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Personal Competencies/Personalized Learning: Reflection on Instruction

COUNCIL OF CHIEF STATE SCHOOL OFFICERS

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Introduction

In 2014, state teams in the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards (SCASS) on Supports & Interventions were asked to identify topics they would like to see further developed. High on the list of priority topics selected by the Supports & Interventions SCASS was the practical application of personalized learning concepts by teachers. This publication and its companion, “Personal Competencies / Personalized Learning: Reflection on Instruction,” were created in response to that request.

According to the Center on Innovations in Learning at Temple University, “Personalization refers to a teacher’s relationships with students and their families and the use of multiple instructional modes to scaffold each student’s learning and enhance the student’s personal competencies. Personalized learning varies the time, place, and pace of learning for each student, enlists the student in the creation of learning pathways, and utilizes technology to manage and document the learning process and access rich sources of information.”¹

Personal competencies underlie all learning and, as described by Redding (2014),² are “an ever-evolving accumulation of related capabilities that facilitate learning and other forms of goal attainment.” Redding identifies four main competency areas:

- Cognitive Competency—prior knowledge which facilitates new learning
- Metacognitive Competency—self-regulation of learning and use of learning strategies
- Motivational Competency—engagement and persistence in pursuit of learning goals
- Social/Emotional Competency—sense of self-worth, regard for others, and emotional understanding and management to set positive goals and make responsible decisions

Personalized learning requires a huge investment in the teacher’s instructional planning, as does the support of personal competencies. As lesson plans are critical to good instruction, it is important to know how they support, activate, foster, or strengthen student personal competencies and personalized learning. This “Lesson Plan Reflection Guide” provides a framework to help educators consider how well their lesson plans support personal competencies and personalized learning. It may serve both as a rubric for evaluating how well a lesson plan personalizes and addresses personal competency, as well as a guide for strengthening lessons to foster personalization and enhance personal competencies.

1 Introduction to CIL’s Connect e-newsletter. See www.centeril.org

2 Personal Competency: A Framework for Building Students’ Capacity to Learn http://www.centeril.org/publications/Personal_Competency_Framework.pdf

Components of a Lesson Plan

Lesson plans are an integral part of education. A lesson plan provides a detailed description of instruction for a class (or specific students in the class) and is used by educators to guide instruction. A lesson plan is a “road map” of what students need to learn, how to teach it effectively, and how to know what has been learned. Lesson plans encourage careful thinking about what the lesson is supposed to accomplish and provide a guide for managing the learning environment. A good lesson plan supports the design and the implementation of instruction by specifying criteria that teaching should follow. An effective lesson plan addresses and integrates three key components:

- Objectives for student learning
- Activities for teaching/learning
- Strategies to check on student understanding

There are numerous online and print resources for lesson plans,³ and often educators create their own (which are frequently shared with other educators). The content and style of lesson plans can vary widely. Sometimes the format is specified for each grade level or subject matter domain and may be mandated by the school or district. Even though the format can vary widely, most well written lesson plans share these critical characteristics:

- a clearly defined learning goal,
- reference or acknowledgement of a standard or framework for the goal,
- the resources needed to implement the lesson,
- the background knowledge or prior experiences needed by students to be successful in the lesson,
- an understanding of how the lesson ties into larger learning or a learning framework,
- what is done to guide or direct learning,
- a method for assessing what has been learned, and
- a plan for individualization, differentiation, or personalization across learners.

Lesson Plan Reflection Guide

The following resource serves both as a rubric for evaluating how well a lesson plan addresses personalization and personal competency, as well as a guide for strengthening lessons to foster personalization and personal competencies. After writing or selecting a lesson plan appropriate for the instructional goals, the teacher (or a peer in a collaborative learning situation) reviews the lesson plan using the rubric as a guide. The goal is to reflect upon how the lesson plan engages personalized learning strategies and enhances personal competencies. The form supports teachers in considering the strengths of the plan, as well as what additional supports might be needed to further personalization and strengthen competencies prior to teaching the lesson.

Best practices suggest that personalized learning should occur throughout teaching. Although the four major personal competency areas (as defined by Redding, 2014) are listed in the rubric, it is important to stress that teachers are not expected to support all four personal competencies within a single lesson. It may take several lessons, spread across days or topics to adequately address these competencies. As personal competencies are ever evolving, none is ever “achieved,” but each is strengthened within the intentional design of the teacher’s instruction. Teachers and all educators are encouraged to consider the cumulative effect of the breadth and depth of a series of lessons when considering personal competencies and the elements of personalization.

³ For more information, see the Center for Innovations in Learning’s Solution Finding Report, *Generating Lesson Plans*, at <http://www.centeril.org/reports/>

Using the Reflection Guide:

Lesson: Include the name of the lesson and attach or indicate the source url if an Internet-based resource is used. The lesson plan itself should include information about the teacher, class, subject matter, grade level, standards-aligned objectives, and other detailed instructional information.

Personal Competencies: Indicate the various strategies embedded in the lesson that support any of the four personal competencies. For each personal competency the teacher intentionally expects to enhance, provide a brief statement of how the lesson or teacher or peers support that competency.

Personalized: Indicate how the plan supports personalization via the teacher's relationship with learners or their families, as well as by objective, content, instructional method, pace, or context (people, time, or place). Specify relevance for personal competencies when applicable.

Technology Support: Note any use of technology to support the lesson, including those supporting personalization and personal competencies. Areas technology can assist include: instruction/delivery (both what is taught and how it is taught, such as online instruction, using sensors and tools, assistive devices), content creation (in both designing the lesson plan as well as in student created work); measurement/data (for formative assessment by the teacher or students); and behavior/citizenship (such as using technology to monitor, display, or reward good behavior, motivation, adherence to classroom rules, or other social/emotional behaviors).

Note: This rubric or similar tool may be converted into an online form that would allow districts and schools to maintain a database of how educators are personalizing instruction and developing competencies. The database then could serve as a resource library of best practices.

Lesson: _____

Plan (Attached or URL): _____

Personal Competencies

The lesson supports these personal competencies:			
Cognitive	Metacognitive	Motivational	Social/Emotional
prior knowledge which facilitates new learning	self-regulation of learning and use of learning strategies	engagement and persistence in pursuit of learning goals	sense of self-worth, regard for others; emotional ability to set positive goals and make responsible decisions
<input type="checkbox"/> connects to prior learning <input type="checkbox"/> reinforces memorization <input type="checkbox"/> builds vocabulary <input type="checkbox"/> enhances core knowledge (e.g., common facts, ideas, phrases, or quotations) <input type="checkbox"/> includes rich reading, writing <input type="checkbox"/> amplifies curiosity—exploration/discovery	<input type="checkbox"/> models thinking strategies <input type="checkbox"/> requires logic <input type="checkbox"/> enhances creativity (divergent thinking) <input type="checkbox"/> includes problem-solving <input type="checkbox"/> builds self-regulatory abilities <input type="checkbox"/> goal setting <input type="checkbox"/> self-monitoring <input type="checkbox"/> self-appraisal <input type="checkbox"/> self-efficacy <input type="checkbox"/> self-management <input type="checkbox"/> seeking help <input type="checkbox"/> includes student tracking of mastery	<input type="checkbox"/> promotes a growth mindset <input type="checkbox"/> stimulates interest in topic <input type="checkbox"/> includes student choice <input type="checkbox"/> connects with students aspirations <input type="checkbox"/> differentiated <input type="checkbox"/> celebrates accomplishments <input type="checkbox"/> provides high levels of engagement <input type="checkbox"/> includes clear indicators of progress	Includes enhancement of: <input type="checkbox"/> self-awareness <input type="checkbox"/> self-management <input type="checkbox"/> social awareness <input type="checkbox"/> relationship skills <input type="checkbox"/> responsible decision-making
Personal competencies will be further addressed in the lesson by....			
Comments:			

Personalization

Personalization involves a teacher's

- relationships with students and their families,
- use of multiple instructional modes to scaffold each student's learning,
- enhancement of the student's personal competencies,
- variation of the time, place, and pace of learning for each student,
- enlistment of the student in the creation of learning pathways, and
- use of technology to manage and document the learning process and access rich sources of information

Personalization occurs within (indicate all that apply):

Relationship with students and their families

- infuses teacher's personality
- includes student self-expression
- includes student's family in lesson-related activities
- Informs student's family of purpose of lesson and student's progress

Standards-aligned learning objectives

- reduced for some students
- expanded for some students
- other _____

Content objectives

- reading level
- materials
- student self-selection
- other _____

Instructional methods

- whole class
- teacher-directed
- peer-instructed
- teacher-directed student groups
- student-led groups
- individual (independent) work
- homework
- progress monitoring w/in instruction
- other _____

Learning pace (check all that apply)

- self-paced
- mastery-based
- other _____

Learning context (people, time, or place):

- alternative instructor
- alternative time/period-
- outside of school day
- class setting
- home
- community setting
- work setting
- other _____

Technology Supports for Personalization and Personal Competencies include:

- instruction/delivery _____
- content creation _____
- measurement/data _____
- behavior/citizenship _____

Lesson Plan Reflection Guide EXAMPLES

Following are examples using the guide to evaluate three free, publically available lesson plans. Example lessons were specifically chosen for their emphasis on teaching thinking skills (meta-cognition) as well as academic content.

Each completed “Lesson Plan Reflection Guide” is followed by the full lesson plan that was reviewed.

Example 1

Lesson Name: *Active Reading Through Self-Assessment: The Student-Made Quiz*

Grades: 6–12th

Subject Area: reading, language arts

Example 2

Lesson Name: *Animal Study: From Fiction to Facts*

Grades: K–2nd

Subject Area: reading

Example 3

Lesson Name: *Examining the Legacy of the American Civil Rights Era*

Grades: 11–12th

Subject Area: social studies

Example 1

Lesson: *Active Reading Through Self-Assessment: The Student-Made Quiz*

Plan (Attached or URL): <http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/active-reading-through-self-30702.html>

Personal Competencies

The lesson supports these personal competencies:			
Cognitive	Metacognitive	Motivational	Social/Emotional
prior knowledge which facilitates new learning	self-regulation of learning and use of learning strategies	engagement and persistence in pursuit of learning goals	sense of self-worth, regard for others; emotional ability to set positive goals and make responsible decisions
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> connects to prior learning <input type="checkbox"/> reinforces memorization <input type="checkbox"/> builds vocabulary <input type="checkbox"/> enhances core knowledge (e.g., common facts, ideas, phrases, or quotations) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> includes rich reading, writing <input type="checkbox"/> amplifies curiosity—exploration/discovery	<input type="checkbox"/> models thinking strategies <input type="checkbox"/> requires logic <input type="checkbox"/> enhances creativity (divergent thinking) <input type="checkbox"/> includes problem-solving <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> builds self-regulatory abilities <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> goal setting <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> self-monitoring <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> self-appraisal <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> self-efficacy <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> self-management <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> seeking help <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> includes student tracking of mastery	<input type="checkbox"/> promotes a growth mindset <input type="checkbox"/> stimulates interest in topic <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> includes student choice <input type="checkbox"/> connects with students aspirations <input type="checkbox"/> differentiated <input type="checkbox"/> celebrates accomplishments <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> provides high levels of engagement <input type="checkbox"/> includes clear indicators of progress	Includes enhancement of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> self-awareness <input type="checkbox"/> self-management <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social awareness <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> relationship skills <input type="checkbox"/> responsible decision-making
Personal competencies will be further addressed in the lesson by....			
-Building an understanding of text	-Thinking about reading carefully -Adjusting for clearer meaning and others reaction -Using strategies to understand, interpret, evaluation, and appreciate texts	-Personalized text selection -Sharig with and challenging peers	-Reflecting on meaning -Considering the reaction of others
Comments:			

Personalization

Personalization involves a teacher's

- relationships with students and their families,
- use of multiple instructional modes to scaffold each student's learning,
- enhancement of the student's personal competencies,
- variation of the time, place, and pace of learning for each student,
- enlistment of the student in the creation of learning pathways, and
- use of technology to manage and document the learning process and access rich sources of information

Personalization occurs within (indicate all that apply):

Relationship with students and their families

- infuses teacher's personality
- includes student self-expression
- includes student's family in lesson-related activities
- Informs student's family of purpose of lesson and student's progress

Standards-aligned learning objectives

- reduced for some students
- expanded for some students
- other _____

Content objectives

- reading level individually appropriate level
- materials may use paper, computer, etc.
- student self-selection student chooses own stories
- other _____

Instructional methods

- whole class
- teacher-directed
- peer-instructed help/models from others
- teacher-directed student groups
- student-led groups
- individual (independent) work
- homework
- progress monitoring w/in instruction record individual steps to completion
- other _____

Learning pace (check all that apply)

- self-paced students/groups signal when ready for each phase
- mastery-based progression based on demonstrating each step
- other students may move in and out of groups

Learning context (people, time, or place):

- alternative instructor
- alternative time/period-
- outside of school day
- class setting
- home
- community setting
- work setting
- other _____

Technology Supports for Personalization and Personal Competencies include:

- instruction/delivery use Newsela to find common texts at different reading levels; Rewordify to adjust reading level <https://rewordify.com>; may use video or other presentation tools
- content creation _____
- measurement/data Poll Everywhere or other audience participation system to ask quiz questions
- behavior/citizenship Class Dojo points for team/collaborative behaviors

LESSON PLAN

Active Reading through Self-Assessment: The Student-Made Quiz



Grades	6 - 12
Lesson Plan Type	Recurring Lesson
Estimated Time	Three 50-minute sessions
Lesson Author	 Jaime R. Wood Portland, Oregon
Publisher	 National Council of Teachers of English

PREVIEW

OVERVIEW

While reading often feels like a solitary activity, teachers can introduce active reading strategies that are social to help students better comprehend their reading. This recurring lesson encourages students to comprehend their reading through inquiry and collaboration. They work independently to choose quotations that exemplify the main idea of the text, come to a consensus about those quotations in collaborative groups, and then formulate “quiz” questions about their reading that other groups will answer. By the end of this lesson, students will have a better understanding of what to focus on in their reading and how to ask good questions.

FEATURED RESOURCES

- **T-Chart Printout:** Students use this printout to gather quotations from a common text and write quiz questions for their peers.

FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

“One of the most important challenges a teacher faces is motivating his or her students to complete reading assignments and to complete them carefully.... The [Student-Made] Quiz offers at least five benefits:

- It provides the standard incentive to read carefully.
- It allows the teacher to give the students immediate feedback.
- It reduces the busywork of grading quizzes.
- It raises the quality of class discussion.
- It serves as a vehicle for collaborative, student-centered learning” (89).

This recurring lesson allows students to work together to better understand their reading by discussing its main ideas before they formulate quiz questions for their peers. These questions move beyond comprehension and test students’ understanding of the significance of the texts they read. The class can then discuss the answers together, providing another learning opportunity, rather than the teacher correcting the quizzes without student input.

Further Reading

Quinn, Timothy and Todd Eckerson. “Motivating Students to Read with Collaborative Reading Quizzes.” [English Journal](#). 100.1 (2010): 89-91.

STANDARDS

NCTE/IRA NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

1. Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.
2. Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience.
3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).
4. Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.
11. Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.
12. Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

RESOURCES & PREPARATION

MATERIALS AND TECHNOLOGY

- A common text for students to read (any genre will work)
 - This lesson uses “[All Summer in a Day](#)” as the model text, but can be adapted for use with a short story of your choosing.

PRINTOUTS

- [T-Chart](#)
- [Example T-Chart for “All Summer in a Day” by Ray Bradbury](#)
- [Additional Example “So What?” Questions](#)
- [“Student-Made Quiz” form](#)
- [“All Summer in a Day” by Ray Bradbury](#) (optional)

PREPARATION

1. Locate the short story “[All Summer in a Day](#)” online.
2. Prepare a computer with Internet access and a projector so you can project the story “[All Summer in a Day](#)” for students while you read it aloud. (You might also choose to make copies of this story for each student so everyone can read along and mark on the story, but that’s not mandatory for this activity.)
3. Make copies of the [Example T-Chart for “All Summer in a Day” by Ray Bradbury](#) and the [Additional Example “So What?” Questions](#) handouts for each student.
4. Choose an additional common text for students to read individually before conducting this lesson. This may be a work of fiction, nonfiction, or poetry; but it should be challenging enough that students will need this in-class time to process it.
5. Determine the main ideas of this text for yourself.
6. Make copies of the blank [T-Chart](#) printout for every student.

7. Make enough copies of the “[Student-Made Quiz](#)” form for each group to have one.

INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN

STUDENT OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- read a text on their own and identify the text’s main ideas.
- brainstorm questions about the main ideas of the text.
- work collaboratively to come to a consensus about the text’s main ideas.
- formulate quiz questions in collaborative groups.
- answer quiz questions belonging to another group.

SESSION ONE

1. Explain to the class that you’re going to read them a story as practice for a (and more complicated) reading assignment and activity that students will complete on their own over the next couple of days.
2. Project “[All Summer in a Day](#)” (and pass out copies of it if you’d like), and tell students that you’d like for them to make a note of the main ideas or most important events as you read.
3. When you finish reading, ask students what they think of the story in general.
4. After they’ve had a chance to share general impressions, ask them to share what they think the main ideas of the story are. Write their answers on the board or chart paper.
5. When/if students note ideas that aren’t all that important to the central meaning of the story, or if they miss some ideas that are important, ask the class to talk about each idea/event and explain why it is or isn’t important to the central meaning of the story. Be sure to point back to the story to specific passages as you discuss main ideas. Ask the students to record notes as you discuss.
6. Ask the class to articulate what the central meaning of the story is and how they know. (Any answer that has something to do with human motivation, jealousy, the tendency to dislike what one doesn’t understand, or the tendency to want what others have is a good answer.)
7. Give each student a copy of the [Example T-Chart for “All Summer in a Day” by Ray Bradbury](#) and the [Additional Example “So What?” Questions](#) handouts.
8. Transition into introducing the activity: explain to the class that you are going to ask them to read a text on their own, make decisions about what the main ideas are, and write quiz questions about the main ideas. Explain that over the next two days, after students have read their text and completed their own [T-Charts](#) individually, they will work in small groups to write quiz questions for other members of the class to answer.
9. Explain that when students finish reading the whole text, they will pull direct quotes from that text that seem to exemplify the main idea/central message of the text. After they’ve found 3 to 5 quotes that really seem important to the meaning of the text, students will write “So What?” questions, or questions that will require people to think deeply about the significance of the quote.
10. Ask students to read the quotes and questions from the [Example T-Chart for “All Summer in a Day” by Ray Bradbury](#) and tell you why they are good quotes and questions. How do these quotes from “[All Summer in a Day](#)” exemplify the main ideas/central meaning of the story? How do these questions help you think further about the significance of these quotes?
11. Give each student a copy of the [T-Chart](#). Explain that students should label the left-hand column of the [T-Chart](#) “Main Idea Quotes” and the right-hand column “So What?” Questions.” Ask students to choose 3-5 quotations from their reading that exemplify the main idea of the text. Then, have them ask at least one “So What?” question about each quote that might turn into a quiz question later.
12. If any time remains, allow students to start reading their common texts in class. Students should finish their reading and their [T-Charts](#) before the next session begins.

SESSION TWO

1. Explain that students are going to work in groups to come to a consensus about the quoted main ideas of their reading. They will need their completed **T-Charts** and the text they read when they move into groups. Encourage students to use the text and make notes on their **T-Charts** in a different color pen or pencil when/if they decide to revise their **T-Charts** so they can differentiate between new and old work.
2. Put students in groups of no more than four. Give them time to discuss and come to consensus about the main ideas of the text. As they work, monitor their progress, but try not to intervene. You will have a chance to correct any mistakes next. (It is important that each group come to consensus because it will force groups to debate and reason out their answers.)
3. Ask a group to volunteer to share the quotes from their reading that they think are main ideas.
4. Ask the rest of the class if they agree or disagree. Have them explain their reasoning. Move to other groups, asking for their quotations and explanations for their decisions about the text.
5. Tell the class when they have found the correct main ideas. If they don't find them, present your own quotes from the text, and ask students to explain why these quotes are the main ideas.
6. Give students the opportunity to share a few of the "So What?" questions they came up with on their own. List them on the board.
7. Explain that some of the best "So What?" questions will not have one right answer or an answer that can be found in the text. Compare the students' questions to those listed on the **Additional Example "So What?" Questions** handout, and discuss which of the students questions are strongest and how to revise them for clarity. (The goal is for students to formulate questions that will require their peers to think beyond the literal level of the text. Look for questions that ask "why" something happened; "how" it affects the text [tone or message] or characters within the text, reader, or external reality; and "what" students should take away from the text.)
8. Ask students to turn in their **T-Charts** until tomorrow when they will use them to create their own quizzes about the reading.

SESSION THREE

1. Return **T-Charts** to the class.
2. Briefly review the characteristics of good "So What?" questions, reminding students to use the **Example T-Chart for "All Summer in a Day" by Ray Bradbury** handout as a guide.
3. Also, briefly review the main ideas that the class came up with yesterday.
4. Ask students to return to the groups they were in yesterday.
5. Give each group one "**Student-Made Quiz**" form, and ask someone from each group to read the directions aloud to their group members.
6. Answer any questions that the class may have before they begin to work in groups. (Remind students that their questions should focus on the main ideas of the text and that they should refer back to the text and their **T-Charts** for ideas.)
7. As groups work together, move around the room to see what kinds of questions they are formulating. Help groups who have questions or who are having trouble coming up with questions that move beyond the literal text.
8. When all groups have formulated five quiz questions, collect their "**Student-Made Quiz**" form and distribute them to other groups, making sure no group has its own quiz.
9. Ask groups to use a separate piece of paper to answer the quiz questions as a group. (Each group should complete one quiz one time.)
10. Have every group staple their answers to the back of the quiz they took, making sure their names are clearly marked on the answer sheet. (Every group should turn in one quiz and one set of answers.)
11. Return each quiz with answers attached to the group who created it. Ask groups to read the answers to their quiz questions aloud to their group members. (You might want to ask students not to mark on the quizzes' answer sheets.) Give them a few minutes to discuss these answers in their groups before they turn their quizzes in.
12. At the end of class, for homework, or at the beginning of class tomorrow, ask students to write a brief reflection of this quiz experience. Use the following questions as a guide for reflection:
 - Were you surprised by the way your peers answered their quiz questions? If so, why? If not, why not?
 - What did these answers reveal about your peers' understanding of the reading?

- What did these answers reveal about the quiz questions you asked?
- How did the practice of collecting quotes, writing questions, and discussing main ideas affect your reading?
- If you could do this activity again, what would you like to do differently next time and what should stay the same?

EXTENSIONS

- With more time, you can go over answers to the quiz questions together as a way to discuss the text more deeply. Encourage students to reference the text as support for their answers.
- Using the [Multigenre Mapper](#), students can relate to their reading in several different ways. Encourage them to write a review, a letter to one of the characters in their reading, an alternate ending, an imitation poem (if their reading was a poem), a letter to the editor related to something that happened in their reading.... The list goes on. This is a great way to help students analyze their reading using multiple genres of writing and illustrations.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT/REFLECTIONS

- Every student must turn in a [T-Chart](#) with at least three quotations and three questions in order to earn full credit for completing this organizer.
- Students will earn full credit on the “[Student-Made Quiz](#)” form as long as every student contributed at least one question.
- Students’ final reflections will serve as an important assessment for this activity. It will help them think critically about their own learning as well as the learning of their peers, and it will also give you feedback about how the students feel about the activity, possibly providing you with ways to improve it in the future.

RELATED RESOURCES

STUDENT INTERACTIVES

Grades **3 - 10** | Student Interactive | Writing & Publishing Prose
[Multigenre Mapper](#)

This interactive invites students to create original multigenre, multimodal works--one drawing and three written texts--making the tool flexible for multiple writing activities.

PRINTOUTS

Grades **3 - 8** | Printout | Graphic Organizer
[T-Chart](#)

Use this T-Chart to examine two facets of an object, situation, or event and to make comparisons related to a variety of subjects and content areas.

STRATEGY GUIDES

Grades **6 - 12** | Strategy Guide
[Promoting Student Self-Assessment](#)

In this Strategy Guide, you’ll learn about a number of specific methods that will promote self-assessment and contribute to a richer understanding of student learning.

COMMENTS

Example 2

Lesson: *Animal Study: From Fiction to Facts*

Plan (Attached or URL): www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/animal-study-from-fiction-286.html

Personal Competencies

The lesson supports these personal competencies:			
Cognitive	Metacognitive	Motivational	Social/Emotional
prior knowledge which facilitates new learning	self-regulation of learning and use of learning strategies	engagement and persistence in pursuit of learning goals	sense of self-worth, regard for others; emotional ability to set positive goals and make responsible decisions
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> connects to prior learning <input type="checkbox"/> reinforces memorization <input type="checkbox"/> builds vocabulary <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> enhances core knowledge (e.g., common facts, ideas, phrases, or quotations) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> includes rich reading, writing <input type="checkbox"/> amplifies curiosity—exploration/discovery	<input type="checkbox"/> models thinking strategies <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> requires logic <input type="checkbox"/> enhances creativity (divergent thinking) <input type="checkbox"/> includes problem-solving <input type="checkbox"/> builds self-regulatory abilities <input type="checkbox"/> goal setting <input type="checkbox"/> self-monitoring <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> self-appraisal <input type="checkbox"/> self-efficacy <input type="checkbox"/> self-management <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> seeking help <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> includes student tracking of mastery	<input type="checkbox"/> promotes a growth mindset <input type="checkbox"/> stimulates interest in topic <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> includes student choice <input type="checkbox"/> connects with students aspirations <input type="checkbox"/> differentiated <input type="checkbox"/> celebrates accomplishments <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> provides high levels of engagement <input type="checkbox"/> includes clear indicators of progress	Includes enhancement of: <input type="checkbox"/> self-awareness <input type="checkbox"/> self-management <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social awareness <input type="checkbox"/> relationship skills <input type="checkbox"/> responsible decision-making
Personal competencies will be further addressed in the lesson by....			
<i>–gather, consider, and synthesize data</i> <i>–compare and categorize fiction and nonfiction information</i>	<i>–how to read carefully and consider information</i> <i>–reflect on what one already knows</i>	<i>–self selection of topic (animal)</i> <i>–creating</i> <i>–sharing with others</i>	<i>–being aware of others point of view</i> <i>–asking for help</i> <i>–supporting others</i>
Comments:			

Personalization

Personalization involves a teacher's

- relationships with students and their families,
- use of multiple instructional modes to scaffold each student's learning,
- enhancement of the student's personal competencies,
- variation of the time, place, and pace of learning for each student,
- enlistment of the student in the creation of learning pathways, and
- use of technology to manage and document the learning process and access rich sources of information

Personalization occurs within (indicate all that apply):

Relationship with students and their families

- infuses teacher's personality
- includes student self-expression
- includes student's family in lesson-related activities
- Informs student's family of purpose of lesson and student's progress

Standards-aligned learning objectives

- reduced for some students # facts found
- other consideration of info from others as "facts"
- expanded for some students vary level of support for "fact finding"

Content objectives

- reading level individually appropriate
- materials may use paper, computer or other
- student self-selection students choose story/animal to study
- other _____

Instructional methods

- whole class
- teacher-directed
- peer-instructed peer model; older student assistance
- teacher-directed student groups
- student-led groups work in pairs
- individual (independent) work
- homework
- progress monitoring w/in instruction record individual steps to completion
- other _____

Learning pace (check all that apply)

- self-paced
- mastery-based
- other students/pairs signal when ready for each phase and progression based on demonstrating each step

Learning context (people, time, or place):

- alternative instructor help from science teacher
- alternative time/period
- outside of school day
- class setting library for research
- home
- community setting field trip to zoo/farm
- work setting
- other _____

Technology Supports for Personalization and Personal Competencies include:

- instruction/delivery use safe search websites
- content creation Voice Thread to make state facts about animal; have others add facts
- measurement/data _____
- behavior/citizenship Class Dojo points for pro-social behavior

LESSON PLAN

Animal Study: From Fiction to Facts



Grades K - 2
Lesson Plan Type Standard Lesson
Estimated Time Five 50-minute sessions
Lesson Author  **Renee Goularte**
Magalia,
California
Publisher 
National Council of Teachers of English

PREVIEW

OVERVIEW

This lesson describes how to use selected fiction and nonfiction literature and careful questioning techniques to help students identify factual information about animals. Children first identify possible factual information from works of fiction which are read aloud, then they listen to read-alouds of nonfiction texts to identify and confirm factual information. This information is then recorded on charts and graphic organizers. Finally, students use the Internet to gather additional information about the animal and then share their findings with the class. The lesson can be used as presented to find information about ants or can be easily adapted to focus on any animal of interest to students. Resources are included for ants, black bears, fish, frogs and toads, penguins, and polar bears.

FEATURED RESOURCES

Animal Inquiry: This online tool helps students organize, record, and then print out information they find while researching an animal. Choose from four organizers: animal facts; animal babies; animal interactions; and animal habitats.

FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

In *Literacy at the Crossroads*, Regie Routman reminds us of the importance of "a greater use of multiple texts in reading instruction," to include not only narrative texts, but informational texts as well. In "Nonfiction Inquiry: Using Real Reading and Writing to Explore the World," Stephanie Harvey stresses the importance of nonfiction: "Nonfiction enhances our understanding. It allows us to investigate the real world and inspires us to dig deeper to inquire and better understand." (13)

Sometimes the line between fact and fiction can be unclear, especially with the wide use of animal characters in works of fiction. Comparing nonfiction and fiction texts containing similar subject matter can help students develop critical thinking skills as they learn to bring their own prior knowledge as well as additional factual information to works of fiction that they read.

Further Reading

Routman, Regie. 1996. *Literacy at the Crossroads: Crucial Talk about Reading, Writing, and Other Teaching Dilemmas*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Harvey, Stephanie. "Nonfiction Inquiry: Using Real Reading and Writing to Explore the World." *Language Arts* 80.1 (September 2002): 12-22.

[Read more about this resource ▶](#)

STANDARDS

NCTE/IRA NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

1. Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.
3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).
6. Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and nonprint texts.
7. Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and nonprint texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.
8. Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.

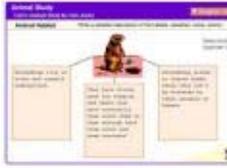
RESOURCES & PREPARATION

MATERIALS AND TECHNOLOGY

- Chart paper and markers
- Parent or other adult helpers
- A set of books including both fiction and nonfiction texts featuring the same animal. The specific animal and books chosen will depend on availability and should reflect student interests. Examples of [text sets](#) are available. As presented, the lesson uses the following three books:
 - *Two Bad Ants* by Chris Van Allsburg (fiction)
 - *One Hundred Hungry Ants* by Bonnie MacKain (fiction)
 - *Armies of Ants* by Walter Retan (nonfiction)
- Alternatively, students can create the text sets by doing a [book sorting activity](#) and one animal can be chosen for whole class study.

STUDENT INTERACTIVES

Grades **3 - 6** | Student Interactive | Inquiry & Analysis
[Animal Inquiry](#)



Supporting inquiry-based research projects, the Animal Inquiry interactive invites elementary students to explore animal facts and habitats using writing prompts to guide and record their findings.

PRINTOUTS

- [Animal Study Recording Sheet](#)

WEBSITES

- [Internet Quest: Ants!](#)
- [Internet Quest: Black Bears!](#)
- [Internet Quest: Fish!](#)
- [Internet Quest: Frogs and Toads!](#)
- [Internet Quest: Penguins!](#)
- [Internet Quest: Polar Bears!](#)
- [The Ant Colony Cycle](#)
- [Ants](#)
- [Antcam](#)
- [Animal Planet](#)
- [ALA's Great Websites for Kids](#)
- [WWF](#)
- [Smithsonian National Zoological Park](#)

PREPARATION

- Gather the fiction and nonfiction books for the project. See the [booklist](#) for suggested titles.
- Prepare two charts, one headed with "What We Think About Ants" and the other "What We Know About Ants" (or customized for the animal that you've chosen).
- Test the [Animal Inquiry](#) interactive graphic organizer and the [Internet Quest: Ants!](#) interactive on your computers to familiarize yourself with the tools and ensure that you have the Flash plug-in installed. You can download the plug-in from the [technical support page](#).
- Arrange for adult helpers (or older students) to help your students explore the Internet sites. If you choose to use the [Internet Quest: Ants!](#) interactive, demonstrate the tool to your helpers before they use it with students.

INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN

STUDENT OBJECTIVES

Students will

- compare and cross-reference information from fiction and nonfiction texts about animals.
- create "facts charts" in whole group formats.

- use an Internet search engine to find Websites with additional factual information about animals in stories read to them.
- record factual information.

SESSION ONE: FICTION READ-ALLOUD

(May be divided into two sessions, if desired)

1. Post the "What We Think About Ants" chart where students can see it.
2. Gather students together for a story. Explain that you are going to read a story about ants that is fiction (define the word if necessary) but that together you are going to see if you can learn anything about ants by reading the story.
3. Read *Two Bad Ants* aloud. Take time to discuss the actions of the ants as you read.
4. When the story is over, ask some key questions about ants that will lead to factual information. Some examples of questions might be:
 - What did these ants want to eat?
 - How hard did the ants have to work to get what they wanted?
 - Can you tell anything about where the ants live from this story?
 - What do ants look like?
5. As a follow-up question, ask, "From listening to this story, what do you think might be true about ants?"
6. Chart students' responses. Because the goal is to have students building information from fiction to fact, it's important that all responses be traced back to the story in some way. If a student suggests information that is not related in any way to the events of the story, it can be acknowledged another way—perhaps by jotting it down on a sticky note for later reference or by starting another chart with additional questions.
7. Tell students they will be adding more information to the chart after listening to another story about ants.
8. Read *One Hundred Hungry Ants* aloud. Take time to point out any relevant information about the ants that might be related to factual information.
9. When the story is finished, ask some key questions to elicit possible factual information. Some examples of questions might be:
 - Did this book give you any additional information about ants?
 - What can you tell me about how these ants traveled?
 - What did these ants want to eat?
 - What else do you think might be true about ants that is in this story?
10. Chart additional information as students make guesses about real behavior of ants. Keep the chart posted for reference in **Session 2**.

SESSION TWO: NONFICTION READ-ALOUD

1. Post the "What We Know About Ants" chart next to the chart from the previous session.
2. Gather students together. Review the chart from the previous session.
3. Explain that you are going to read a nonfiction book about ants (define the word if necessary), and that they will be able to find out whether the things they thought about ants are really true. Let them know that you will make a new list of things that they learn about ants from this book.
4. Read *Armies of Ants* aloud. Stop whenever appropriate to point out factual information that matches any guessed information listed on the first chart. Note that information from the first chart with a star so that it will be easy to locate later on.
5. When you have finished the book, ask students to tell you what they know about ants from this story. Write responses on the chart.
6. If a student suggests information that isn't accurate, reread short sections of the book for reference, clarification, and to help the student adjust his or her response.

SESSION THREE: GATHER INFORMATION FROM THE INTERNET

Option One: Using the [Internet Quest: Ants!](#)

1. Explain the class activity: students will explore Websites, using the [Internet Quest: Ants!](#) interactive, looking for information that answers questions from their "What We Think About Ants" and "What We Know About Ants" charts. Depending upon your computer access and students' computer skills, students can work independently, in small groups, in groups with an adult helper, or as a whole class (with the interactive projected using an LCD Projector).
2. If students will be working on their own or in groups, demonstrate the [Internet Quest: Ants!](#) interactive, showing students how to view the related Web pages as well as how to print and save their work:
 - i. On the first screen, read the instructions to students.
 - ii. Click **Next** to move to the first question.
 - iii. Show students where to locate the related link for each question.
 - iv. Demonstrate how to move between the interactive and the Web page.
 - v. Type a sample answer to the question in order to demonstrate that writing is not limited to the size of the box shown on screen. Answers will scroll.
 - vi. If desired, show students that how to copy a sentence from the Web page and paste it into the appropriate row and column on the chart.
 - vii. Click the **Next** button to move to the next question.
 - viii. Click the **Next** button again, to demonstrate that students must answer each question before moving on to a new question.
 - ix. Explain that you cannot move back to change an answer. If desired, explain that students can open the text later (see below).

- x. Click **Finish** at the top of the screen.
 - xi. Type your name in the space provided.
 - xii. Click the **Print** button beneath your name. Your answers will be displayed in a Web browser window.
 - xiii. To print answers, choose the **Print** command from the **File** menu. To save your answers, choose the **Save As...** command from the **File** menu. Students can open the file later in a Web editor or a word processor that imports HTML (such as Microsoft Word or AppleWorks).
 - xiv. Show students that the instructions for using the tool are available by clicking **Help** at the top of the screen.
3. Once students understand the activity, they can begin exploring the sites using the [Internet Quest: Ants!](#) interactive.
 4. Monitor students as they browse the Websites, answering any questions. Remind students to save and/or print their answers.
 5. Once students have explored the sites, invite them to share their findings, adding new information to the chart headed "What We Know About Ants."
 6. When Internet exploration is complete, review information on both charts, making comparisons as appropriate. Write "Yes" or "No" next to each guess on the first chart. Add correct information, elicited from student responses, to any items marked with "No."

Option Two: Searching with a Web Browser

1. Load the following Websites onto computers:
 - [Ants](#), from Enchanted Learning

 - [Ask Jeeves for Kids](#) or [Ask Jeeves](#)
2. Do a whole group demonstration showing some navigational tips on each Website. Note: Website exploration can be done by the teacher with the whole group if computers are limited, or with adult helpers working with small groups.
3. Have students explore the [Ants](#) website to find more information about ants or to confirm information which is already charted.
4. Other students can use [Ask Jeeves for Kids](#) or [Ask Jeeves](#) to find additional information or to check charted information. (Note that additional sites are also listed in the **Resources** section.)
5. Add new information to the chart headed "What We Know About Ants" as students find it online.
6. When Internet exploration is complete, review information on both charts, making comparisons as appropriate. Write "Yes" or "No" next to each guess on the first chart. Add correct information, elicited from student responses, to any items marked with "No."

SESSION FOUR: RECORD FINDINGS

1. Start with an opening question: "What are some things that you learned about ants?"

2. After students have responded, explain to students that they are going to record what they know.
3. Have students work in groups with parent helpers to record their information on the [Animal Study](#) interactive graphic organizer.
4. Print out the information for students. Alternately, have students record their information on the [Animal Study Recording Sheet](#).

SESSION FIVE: GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Gather students together for a discussion.
2. Have students share what they've learned, not only about animals, but about the information-gathering process itself. Keep this conversation informal, but be sure to address what worked well and what was easiest about the process, and what didn't work or what might have worked better.
3. Chart any information that might be useful for another time.

EXTENSIONS

- Instead of creating sets of books before starting the lesson, have students sort books from the classroom library to create the sets. See [Book Sorting: Using Observation and Comprehension to Categorize Books](#).
- Group students according to interest in certain animals and have each group investigate an animal of its choice, starting with selecting their own books to read, and ending with whole group sharing.
- Have students use the information they gather to write reports using the ReadWriteThink lesson [Writing Reports in Kindergarten? Yes!](#)
- Have students write what they learned about the animal in their journals.
- Have students write picture books about the animal using the guidelines in the ReadWriteThink lesson [Draw a Story: Stepping From Pictures to Writing](#).
- For fun, students can create fictional bugs with the [Monster Bug interactive](#) from the *Magic Schoolbus* site.
- Older students can extend the animal study to mathematics with [Bridging Literature and Mathematics by Visualizing Mathematical Concepts](#), which uses picture books to talk about size and ratio.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT/REFLECTIONS

Teacher observation of the following:

- Participation in discussion
- Detailed journal entries
- Engagement in the research process (searching for and recording facts about the animal)
- Facts and observations included on the [Animal Study Recording Sheets](#)

RELATED RESOURCES

STUDENT INTERACTIVES

Grades **3 - 6** | Student Interactive | Inquiry & Analysis

Animal Inquiry

Supporting inquiry-based research projects, the Animal Inquiry interactive invites elementary students to explore animal facts and habitats using writing prompts to guide and record their findings.

CALENDAR ACTIVITIES

Grades **K - 5** | Calendar Activity | February 2

Groundhog Day is February 2.

A celebration is held for Groundhog day where students engage in a shadow-watching activity, make predictions, and listen to news reports to compare what happens with Punxsutawney Phil.

Grades **1 - 5** | Calendar Activity | November 3

Stellaluna author Janell Cannon was born in 1957. 📺

After reading *Stellaluna*, students discuss themes in the story and do a unit on bats or a creative writing activity based on the book.

Grades **1 - 6** | Calendar Activity | July 1

The first U.S. zoo opened in Philadelphia in 1874.

Students consider how zoos have changed over the past century and design their own zoo of the future using drawings, posters, dioramas, or other displays.

Grades **K - 2** | Calendar Activity | July 26

Jan Berenstain, co-author of the popular Berenstain Bears series of books, was born in 1923.

Teachers create “Book Kits” for students to help promote family literacy. Berenstain Bears books are included in these “book kits” which also include nonfiction books on the same subject, home activities, reproducibles, and parent information.

PROFESSIONAL LIBRARY

Grades **K - 8** | Professional Library | Journal

Nonfiction Inquiry: Using Real Reading and Writing to Explore the World

Nonfiction is the genre most likely to spur children’s passion and wonder for learning. This article discusses way to motivate children to read nonfiction.

PODCAST EPISODES

Grades **K - 5** | Podcast Episode

World of Animals 🎧

Explore the world of animals through Caroline Arnold’s nonfiction picture books for children.

Grades **K - 5** | Podcast Episode

Animal Perspectives 🎧

Discover books that allow you to look at the world through the eyes of an animal!

Grades **K - 5** | Podcast Episode

Barnyard Antics 🎧

Move to the beat with musical barnyard animals who live it up when the sun goes down!

COMMENTS

■ Published Comments

**Lisa Fink, RWT
Staff**
April 12, 2010

Thanks for letting us know about those links. We have removed them from the lesson while we look for replacements.

Lynda Bradford
April 11, 2010

Thank you for compiling this Unit Plan; I will be using portions of it in an activity for my students. Unfortunately, some of the links weren't connecting. I would have enjoyed expanding my lesson with those missing links, however, more than enough information was provided.

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Example 3

Lesson: *Examining the Legacy of the American Civil Rights Era*

Plan (Attached or URL): <http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/examining-legacy-american-civil-30642.html>

Personal Competencies

The lesson supports these personal competencies:			
Cognitive	Metacognitive	Motivational	Social/Emotional
prior knowledge which facilitates new learning	self-regulation of learning and use of learning strategies	engagement and persistence in pursuit of learning goals	sense of self-worth, regard for others; emotional ability to set positive goals and make responsible decisions
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> connects to prior learning <input type="checkbox"/> reinforces memorization <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> builds vocabulary <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> enhances core knowledge (e.g., common facts, ideas, phrases, or quotations) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> includes rich reading, writing <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> amplifies curiosity—exploration/discovery	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> models thinking strategies <input type="checkbox"/> requires logic <input type="checkbox"/> enhances creativity (divergent thinking) <input type="checkbox"/> includes problem-solving <input type="checkbox"/> builds self-regulatory abilities <input type="checkbox"/> goal setting <input type="checkbox"/> self-monitoring <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> self-appraisal <input type="checkbox"/> self-efficacy <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> self-management <input type="checkbox"/> seeking help <input type="checkbox"/> includes student tracking of mastery	<input type="checkbox"/> promotes a growth mindset <input type="checkbox"/> stimulates interest in topic <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> includes student choice <input type="checkbox"/> connects with students aspirations <input type="checkbox"/> differentiated <input type="checkbox"/> celebrates accomplishments <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> provides high levels of engagement <input type="checkbox"/> includes clear indicators of progress	Includes enhancement of: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> self-awareness <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> self-management <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social awareness <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> relationship skills <input type="checkbox"/> responsible decision-making
Personal competencies will be further addressed in the lesson by....			
<i>–gather, consider and evaluate, and synthesize information</i> <i>–organize thinking and materials</i>	<i>–draw on their prior experience, readings, and interactions with others to formulate a perspective</i> <i>–consider the potential biases of one’s perspective</i>	<i>–self selection of topic</i>	<i>–perspective taking</i> <i>–consideration of others’ experiences</i>
Comments:			

Personalization

Personalization involves a teacher's

- relationships with students and their families,
- use of multiple instructional modes to scaffold each student's learning,
- enhancement of the student's personal competencies,
- variation of the time, place, and pace of learning for each student,
- enlistment of the student in the creation of learning pathways, and
- use of technology to manage and document the learning process and access rich sources of information

Personalization occurs within (indicate all that apply):

Relationship with students and their families

- infuses teacher's personality
- includes student self-expression
- includes student's family in lesson-related activities
- Informs student's family of purpose of lesson and student's progress

Standards-aligned learning objectives

- reduced for some students
- expanded for some students
- other _____

Content objectives

- reading level individually appropriate
- materials may use paper, computer or other
- student self-selection topic personal choice (e.g., Civil Rights)
- other _____

Instructional methods

- whole class may work in small groups or individually
- teacher-directed
- peer-instructed
- teacher-directed student groups
- student-led groups
- individual (independent) work
- homework
- progress monitoring w/in instruction
- other record individual steps to completion

Learning pace (check all that apply)

- self-paced
- mastery-based
- other students/pairs signal when ready for each phase and progression based on demonstrating each step

Learning context (people, time, or place):

- alternative instructor
- alternative time/period-
- outside of school day
- class setting
- home
- community setting interview community members
- work setting
- other _____

Technology Supports for Personalization and Personal Competencies include:

- instruction/delivery use Newsla to find factual texts at different reading levels; Rewordify to adjust reading level <https://rewordify.com>
- content creation may use video or other presentation tools
- measurement/data _____
- behavior/citizenship play iCivics to see how perspectives and logical positions are framed

LESSON PLAN

Examining the Legacy of the American Civil Rights Era



Grades	11 - 12
Lesson Plan Type	Standard Lesson
Estimated Time	Five 50-minute sessions (plus additional time for viewing <i>Legacy: Black and White in America</i> , optional)
Lesson Author	 Scott Filkins Champaign, Illinois
Publisher	 National Council of Teachers of English

PREVIEW

OVERVIEW

As part of their study of Richard Wright’s autobiography *Black Boy* (or another work of African American literature set in the post-Civil War, pre-Civil Rights era), students will participate in personal reflection and critical research of the current black-white racial divide in America. By examining Wright’s book in the context of three contemporary events in American social politics (the election of Barack Obama, the Gates-Crowley incident, and the Jena Six case), students will gain a richer understanding of the work, and what it means to be an American today.

FEATURED RESOURCES

- [Civil Rights Era Websites](#)
- [Contemporary Issues Websites](#)
- [Comparative Historical Analysis Questions](#)

FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

It is "too common a storyline" in high school English classes that "we don't need to talk about race" (29). Kelli Sassi and Ebony Elizabeth Thomas argue that teachers need to find alternative to classroom approaches that typify "colormuteness and colorblindness that merely perpetuate social inequities" (30). Too often, when students read a piece of African American literature set in the post-slavery, pre-Civil Rights era, they feel they can dismiss the social world of the text as merely "historical," something that's corrected now by legislation and improved public opinion. This lesson seeks to bring racial advances and inequity to the forefront, stressing both the gains and remaining goals of the American Civil Rights movement.

Further Reading

Sassi, Kelli, and Ebony Elizabeth Thomas. "Walking the Talk: Examining Privilege and Race in a Ninth-Grade Classroom." *English Journal* 97 : 6, 20 -25. Print.

[Read more about this resource ▶](#)

STANDARDS

NCTE/IRA NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

1. Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.
2. Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience.
3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).
4. Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.
5. Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.
7. Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and nonprint texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.
8. Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.
11. Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.

RESOURCES & PREPARATION

MATERIALS AND TECHNOLOGY

- Copies of Richard Wright's *Black Boy* or [another appropriate work](#)

PRINTOUTS

- [Selected Focus Scenes from *Black Boy*](#)
- [America Then - America Now Chart](#)
- [Analyzing the Civil Rights Era Chart](#)
- [Contemporary Event Research Chart](#)
- [Comparative Historical Analysis Questions](#)
- [Response Options](#)
- [Civil Rights Era Websites](#)
- [Contemporary Issues Websites](#)

WEBSITES

- [Facing History, Facing Ourselves collection on Civil Rights](#)
Facing History and Ourselves has many resource books, study guides, videos, lesson plans and web links to help students explore the U.S. civil rights movement.

PREPARATION

1. Select and obtain copies of *Black Boy* or [another work by an African-American author](#) students will read. Students need to read and discuss the work before beginning the activities in this lesson.
2. Because of the potentially sensitive nature of some of the conversation in this lesson, consider your students' readiness for an investigation of the contemporary black-white racial divide in America. Read the *English Journal* article "Walking the Talk: Examining Privilege and Race in a Ninth-Grade Classroom" for ideas (such as the privilege walk) on how to prepare students.
3. Obtain and preview a copy of the documentary *Legacy: Black and White in America* (optional). If you choose to show the documentary, select scenes that are most relevant for the discussions you wish to occur. You may need to obtain permission for viewing the documentary because of the isolated use of school-inappropriate language in a few scenes.
4. Make copies of all necessary handouts.
5. Arrange for access to Internet connected computers for Sessions Two and Three.

INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN

STUDENT OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- develop an understanding of the American Civil Rights movement through research and talk with peers.
- compare and contrast the American racial divide as presented in a work of literature and in contemporary society.
- take on a historical persona to respond to *Black Boy* in the context of an understanding of the contemporary American racial divide.

SESSION ONE

1. Introduce the lesson by asking students to recall the specific ways in which Richard Wright describes the black/white divide in his autobiography *Black Boy*. Ask students to consider what characteristics, aspirations, and attitudes can belong to a black American in the world of Wright's childhood and adolescence? To a white American? Give students time to think and write on this topic.
2. Have students form small groups to discuss their initial impressions. Encourage students to return to the text to find specific examples and situations related to their observations. Share with students [Selected Scenes from Black Boy](#) if necessary.
3. Ask students to share their insights with the class as you record their ideas on the board, an overhead, or chart paper.
4. Then have students reflect informally about how life in America now—several decades beyond the Civil Rights Era—is similar to and different from the world in *Black Boy*. Distribute [the American Then - America Now chart](#) to challenge students to think about what might be worse, what might be about the same, and what might be better for young Richard Wright now.
5. Give students time to record their thinking the chart, using ideas from the earlier discussion and any of their own new observations.
6. Collect their charts and select some contrasting responses to write on a blank copy of [the chart](#). Keep responses anonymous and prepare the chart for projection on an overhead or other means.

SESSION TWO

1. Project the collection of responses on the [America Then-America Now Chart](#) and ask students to comment on the varied views held by their classmates. As students are discussing, challenge them to agree upon definitions of key concepts such as racism, segregation, discrimination, desegregation, integration, and equality.

2. Point out that the specific social and political actions known collectively as the Civil Rights movement are largely responsible for shifts from life in Richard Wright's childhood and adolescence to now.
3. Inform students that they should think about these varied responses, as well as the many situations Wright depicts in his autobiography, as they research three aspects of the American Civil Rights movement:
 - What was promised?
 - What was achieved?
 - What is still politically and socially elusive?
4. Based on what you know about your students, decide whether or not they are capable of going directly to the research and response phase. If you think it would be useful, you may wish to model thoughtful responses to one of the web sites as students observe.
5. Direct students to the [Civil Rights Era websites](#) and allow students to search and browse the resources for answers to the three overarching questions, using the [Analyzing the Civil Rights Era chart](#) to record their findings.
6. As students are researching, circulate among them, answering questions and encouraging depth of responses.
7. At the end of the session, have students in groups of three share their findings.
8. For the next session, ask students to begin synthesizing their understanding by writing a paragraph that captures what they learned from their research and conversations with classmates.
9. If you opt to show the documentary *Legacy: Black and White in America*, do so after this session. Ask students to focus on the same three questions as they view and take notes on the film.

SESSION THREE

1. Begin this session by having several students read the paragraphs they wrote. Facilitate a conversation about the goals and accomplishments associated with the Civil Rights movement. You may wish to consult resources from the [Facing History, Facing Ourselves collection on Civil Rights](#) to help shape the discussion.
2. Explain to students that in this session, they will explore one of three contemporary events that will inform their understanding of the legacy of the Civil Rights movement.
3. Direct students to the [collection of websites](#) on the election of Barack Obama, the Gates/Crowley incident, and the case of the Jena Six.
4. Using the [Contemporary Event Research chart](#) have each student in the groups from the previous session investigate one of the three contemporary events (either you or the students will need to decide who researches which event). Let students know that they will share what they learned with their group members in the next session.
5. Give students time to research the websites and thoroughly answer their research questions.

SESSION FOUR

1. Ask students to reconvene their groups of three and participate in a focused comparative historical analysis. Considering key events from *Black Boy* and the Civil Rights Era, the information and perspectives from the documentary (optional), and each of the events they researched in the previous session, have them respond to these [Comparative Historical Analysis Questions](#):
 - How do these events illuminate the current state of the racial divide in America?
 - How do these events change your own attitudes or assumptions about race?
 - What are the lessons to be learned from each of these events on their own, and taken as a whole?
2. After students have time to share their own thoughts, ask a volunteer from each group to share three key ideas from their group's discussion.
3. Record these thoughts on the board, an overhead, or chart paper.
4. For the next session, students should write a brief reflection that explains what they learned from their research and conversations with the group and full class. The content of these reflections will vary highly

based on the inquiry nature of the lesson, but encourage students to continue to clarify their current understanding of the black-white divide in America and to assess their own assumptions about race, identity, and opportunity in America.

SESSION FIVE

1. Begin the session by asking a few students to read their reflective writing.
2. Then return to students their observations about *Black Boy* on the [America Then - America Now Chart](#) from Session One.
3. In light of the learning and conversations from Sessions Two, Three, and Four, have them review their observations and [respond to the novel](#) in one of the following ways:
 - Assuming the persona of Richard Wright, write to the American citizens of the present about the most pressing aspect of the racial divide. Suggest solutions for bridging that divide.
 - Assuming the persona of a citizen of the present (you may choose the citizen's racial and class identity), write a letter to Richard Wright explaining why or why not he should be hopeful about the future (the citizen's present).
 - Assuming the identity of Barack Obama, Professor Gates, Officer Crowley, or one of the Jena Six, explain how the events of *Black Boy* help shape your understanding of the contemporary racial divide.
4. In addition to writing a [response to the novel](#), ask students to write a reflection on what they learned through this lesson. Encourage them to comment on what frustrated and angered them, in addition to what new insights they gained and what viewpoints were confirmed.

EXTENSIONS

- Though this lesson focuses specifically on the black-white racial divide, students can examine other divisions that have a legacy of social and political movements associated with them. Possible topics include the women's rights movement, the Mexican immigration controversy, and the movement for gay marriage rights.
- Students can compare the portrayals of post-slavery/pre-Civil Rights movement America by reading an additional text from the list of [works by an African-American author](#) to further enhance the impact of this lesson.
- Encourage students to identify a particular instance of the black-white racial divide in their school or community. After interviewing students or community members, have them write a newspaper article or letter to the editor addressing the issue.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT/REFLECTIONS

- Provide feedback to students' [response to the novel](#). The nature of the assignment makes objective evaluation, as with a rubric, complicated. Provide comments that assess students' ability to take on the persona they chose, their insight into the novel, and their ability to apply what they learned through their own research and that of their peers.

RELATED RESOURCES

LESSON PLANS

Grades **6 - 8** | Lesson Plan | Standard Lesson

[Examining History with Maya Angelou's Poetry](#)

To understand the historical background that influenced Maya Angelou's poems, students research events to produce trading cards using the ReadWriteThink Trading Card App or Trading Card Student Interactive. Through

the sharing of these trading cards, students understand the historical background as they analyze Angelou’s poetry.

Grades **6 - 8** | Lesson Plan | Standard Lesson

Entering History: Nikki Giovanni and Martin Luther King, Jr.

Nikki Giovanni’s poem “The Funeral of Martin Luther King, Jr.” is paired with Dr. King’s “I Have a Dream” speech, taking students on a quest through time to the Civil Rights movement.

Grades **9 - 12** | Lesson Plan | Standard Lesson

Exploring the Power of Martin Luther King, Jr.’s Words through Diamante Poetry

Students explore the ways that powerful and passionate words communicate the concepts of freedom, justice, discrimination, and the American Dream in Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech.

Grades **9 - 12** | Lesson Plan | Standard Lesson

I Have a Dream: Exploring Nonviolence in Young Adult Texts

Students will identify how Martin Luther King Jr.’s dream of nonviolent conflict-resolution is reinterpreted in modern texts. Homework is differentiated to prompt discussion on how nonviolence is portrayed through characterization and conflict. Students will be formally assessed on a thesis essay that addresses the Six Kingian Principles of Nonviolence.

Grades **9 - 12** | Lesson Plan | Standard Lesson

Demonstrating Understanding of Richard Wright’s *Rite of Passage*

Students use the elements of persuasion for a specific audience to demonstrate their understanding of Richard Wright’s accessible and engaging coming-of-age novel, *Rite of Passage*.

CALENDAR ACTIVITIES

Grades **7 - 12** | Calendar Activity | September 4

Richard Wright was born in 1908.

Students read an appropriate excerpt from *Black Boy*, discuss the incident in which Richard gets into trouble, and write found poems.

Grades **9 - 12** | Calendar Activity | September 23

Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, was integrated in 1957.

After viewing some footage from the actual event, students jot down thoughts and feelings of the Little Rock Nine. Students then write a bio-poem that might have been written by one of these students on this historic day.

Grades **K - 12** | Calendar Activity | February 1

Take part in the African American Read-In!

Students come together with family and friends to take part in a read-in of books by African American authors and report their results.

PROFESSIONAL LIBRARY

Grades **8 - 12** | Professional Library | Journal

Walking the Talk: Examining Privilege and Race in a Ninth-Grade Classroom

The authors describe their struggles and eventual success with students in constructing a “counternarrative to color muteness and colorblindness”—the self-imposed student segregation and silencing of voice.



Personal Competencies: Personalized Learning—Lesson Plan Reflection

http://www.ccsso.org/Resources/Publications/Personal_CompetenciesPersonalized_Learning_Lesson_Plan_Reflection_Guide.html

Personal Competencies: Personalize Learning—Reflection on Instruction

http://www.ccsso.org/Resources/Publications/Personal_CompetenciesPersonalized_Learning_Reflection_on_Instruction.html

State Supports to Districts and Schools: How SEAs Rate the Impact

http://www.ccsso.org/Resources/Publications/State_Supports_to_Districts_and_Schools_How_SEAs_Rate_the_Impact.html