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| **Grade 4**  **Unit Overview**  ***The Literary Essay: Writing About Fiction*** | |
| **Focus Teaching Points** | * Reading closely and writing to generate ideas about texts * Using thought prompts and questions to grow and elaborate on ideas * Using boxes and bullets to structure essays * Using booklets as a system for collecting essay material (*at least for the first round of essay writing*) * Writing and revising ideas about characters—traits, motivations, struggles, changes and life lessons * Empathizing with characters to grow ideas * Elaborating on theories about characters and on central ideas of the text * Supporting ideas with different types of evidence * Citing textual evidence * Evaluating evidence * Using descriptions of author’s craft (i.e. use of literary devices) as evidence * Using transitional phrases to introduce evidence and examples * Finding and testing a thesis * Studying literary essays * Noticing patterns in texts to develop stronger theses * Developing complex ideas about texts; seeing different sides in stories * Writing flash draft literary essays * Revising essays * Writing beginnings and endings * Writing compare-contrast essays * Editing essays * Exploring punctuation |
| **Key CCSS Standards** | ***Reading for Literature***   * *1-10*   ***Writing***   * *1a-d*, *3a-e, 4-10*   ***Language***   * *1, 1a-I, 2, 2a-g, 3, 3a-b, 4, 4a-d, 5, 5a-c, 6* |
| **Bends in the Road** | * Writing about reading: Literary essays * Raising the quality of literary essays * Writing compare-and-contrast essays |
| **Recommended Professional Resource(s) to Guide Instruction** | *The Literary Essay: Writing about Fiction* from *Units of Study in Opinion, Information and Narrative Writing, Grade 4* (2013) by Lucy Calkins, Kathleen Tolan and Alexandra Marron, including the resources available on [heinemann.com](http://www.heinemann.com) |
| **Recommended Anchor/Mentor Texts** | * *Fox* by Margaret Wild * Familiar short stories about which students can write literary essays; see samples at [Teaching Resources on the Literacy Coach website](http://ppsgrade4.weebly.com/teaching-resources14.html) * Teacher-created and co-constructed sample essays; see samples of student writing at [heinemann.com](http://www.heinemann.com) |
| **Tips for the Unit** | * *Literary Essays: Writing about Fiction* is a sophisticated and in-depth unit that aligns beautifully with the reading workshop and builds on your earlier essay unit. As your students read more deeply, paying close attention to characters, theme and author’s craft, they are doing the thinking work at the foundation of this *Literary Essay* unit. * Given the depth and importance of the unit, and its alignment to Massachusetts standardized tests, we encourage you to try out this unit as faithfully as you can, making time for each of the bends in the road and following the sequence of sessions which build on one another. As always, we recommend that you read the “Welcome to the Unit” section at the beginning of the unit, found on pages vi – ix. * As you plan out the unit you may find that teaching points recommended for small group, for example, are appropriate for everyone. If that is the case, use that teaching point for another day’s minilesson. * It is extremely helpful to support students’ talk and elaboration of ideas about texts during the *reading* workshop. This will help students to elaborate on the examples they use in supporting their thesis statements in their literary essays. * There are many new resources to support this unit, including short texts, anchor charts, and student writing samples. These can all be found on either this unit’s resources on [heinemann.com](http://www.heinemann.com) or on the [Literacy Coach website under Teaching Resources for this unit.](http://ppsgrade4.weebly.com/teaching-resources14.html) |
| **Materials and Resources** | Each student:   * Writer’s Notebook (preferably hard bound composition book that students personalize) divided into sections, such as: *Writing Ideas* (e.g. lists for generating seed ideas); *Try It!* (for minilesson exercises), *Writing* (this section can be labeled by genre or unit to house all entries students write in a particular unit and from which students can select ideas to draft longer outside of the notebook) * Writing folder for drafts and any reference materials (e.g. high frequency words)   Teacher:   * Writer’s Notebook for modeling * Teacher-generated writing for modeling   Anchor charts, co-constructed with students, that support brainstorming, generating seed ideas, revision and editing strategies  Anchor charts specific to the teaching of the unit: see new charts and sample student writing available at [heinemann.com](http://www.heinemann.com) |
| **Assessment** | * Use the students’ writing from the previous essay unit (including the post-assessment if you administered that) and the content of the students’ written responses from the January Silent Reading Assessment to guide you in planning the sessions in this unit. * We encourage you to continue to use the Opinion Writing rubrics, checklists and learning progressions from the [Assessment Tab](http://ppsgrade4.weebly.com/assessment9.html) throughout the unit. New picture checklists can be found at [heinemann.com](http://www.heinemann.com). |
| **Celebrations** | * You and your students might create different anthologies featuring student essays. One type of anthology you might create could be around a text—“Spaghetti,” for example, or “Gloria Who Might be My Best Friend.” These anthologies would be similar to a volume of literary criticism for adults about different interpretations of a piece of literature. * You might also create anthologies based on favorite texts. Children could even extend this work by reading each other’s essays and taking notes on the connections they see between favorites. * Children might also read each other’s essays and use these essays to prompt discussion, possibly with students in another classroom within your grade. * For a discussion of these ideas and others, see pages 182-183 of the unit. |