

# EQuIP Review Feedback



**Lesson/Unit Name:** Child Soldier Unit

**Content Area:** English language arts

**Grade Level:** 7<sup>th</sup> Grade

**Overall Rating:**

**E**

Exemplar

## Dimension I – Alignment to the Depth of the CCSS

<p><i>The lesson/unit aligns with the letter and spirit of the CCSS:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Targets a set of grade-level CCSS ELA/Literacy standards.</li> <li>✓ Includes a clear and explicit purpose for instruction.</li> <li>✓ Selects text(s) that measure within the grade-level text complexity band and are of sufficient quality and scope for the stated purpose (e.g., presents vocabulary, syntax, text structures, levels of meaning/purpose, and other qualitative characteristics similar to CCSS grade-level exemplars in Appendices A &amp; B).</li> </ul> <p><u><i>A unit or longer lesson should:</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Integrate reading, writing, speaking and listening so that students apply and synthesize advancing literacy skills.</li> <li>☐ (Grades 3-5) Build students’ content knowledge and their understanding of reading and writing in social studies, the arts, science or technical subjects through the coherent selection of texts.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Standards</b></p> <p>Lessons include a set of standards. There is evidence of RI.1 and RL.1 in both lesson 1 and 2 as students record evidence and make meaning of the text on the response sheet and in Cornell Notes. Lessons 2 and 3 target W.1 through the Emmanuel Jal Paragraph Assignment and research paper. Furthermore, Lessons 1 -3 target the following: W.4.10 evidenced in reading from multiple sources, writing routinely in notes, quick writes, and full paragraphs; W.3.9 in synthesizing articles, songs, poems, and speeches on the topic of child soldiers; and SL.1.1. through opportunities for discussion (e.g.: Lesson 1 guided practice, Lesson 2 Fishbowl).</p> <p><b>Purpose</b></p> <p>The purpose of the unit is to write a research paper on child soldiers. Lessons 1 and 2 build background knowledge and provide opportunities to practice gathering evidence from primary and secondary sources. Each lesson includes a unit overview to illustrate how the lessons are purposefully sequenced and coherent.</p> <p><b>Text Selection</b></p> <p>There is a lot of reading within this unit that is required of the students. The article in lesson two (Analysis of a News Article) was given a Lexile of 1350. This places the article within the ninth to tenth grade text complexity band. A lower level article is provided for students who may need additional support while reading. In the final lesson, the students are asked to look up and pull evidence from various sources. Depending on the complexity level of each source, the resource project could provide ample opportunities for students to read, evaluate, and analyze complex texts.</p> <p><b>Integrate reading, writing, speaking and listening</b></p> <p>This is an area of strength in the unit. Close reading of multiple sources is well integrated with gallery walk discussions, note taking and the culminating writing task.</p>
<p><b>Rating: 3 – Meets most to all of the criteria in the dimension</b></p>	

## Dimension II – Key Shifts the CCSS

<p><i>The lesson/unit addresses key shifts in the CCSS:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>Reading Text Closely:</b> Makes reading text(s) closely, examining textual evidence, and discerning deep meaning a central focus of instruction.</li> <li>✓ <b>Text-Based Evidence:</b> Facilitates rich and rigorous evidence-based discussions and writing about common texts through a</li> </ul>	<p><b>Reading Text Closely</b></p> <p>Text is central in this unit, and the lessons are structured such that students will build knowledge from multiple sources and will make connections among texts and learned material. Lesson steps provide specific strategies for students to engage with text multiple times. One example of this is within Lesson 1 in which students read and answer Text Dependent Questions in their first reading of articles and then use a color coding annotation technique to gather text evidence.</p>
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<p>sequence of specific, thought-provoking, and text-dependent questions (including, when applicable, questions about illustrations, charts, diagrams, audio/video, and media).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>Writing from Sources:</b> Routinely expects that students draw evidence from texts to produce clear and coherent writing that informs, explains, or makes an argument in various written forms (e.g., notes, summaries, short responses, or formal essays).</li> <li>✓ <b>Academic Vocabulary:</b> Focuses on building students' academic vocabulary in context throughout instruction.</li> </ul> <p><i>A unit or longer lesson should:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>Increasing Text Complexity:</b> Focus students on reading a progression of complex texts drawn from the grade-level band. Provide text-centered learning that is sequenced, scaffolded and supported to advance students toward independent reading of complex texts at the CCR level.</li> <li>✓ <b>Building Disciplinary Knowledge:</b> Provide opportunities for students to build knowledge about a topic or subject through analysis of a coherent selection of strategically sequenced, discipline-specific texts.</li> <li>✓ <b>Balance of Texts:</b> Within a collection of grade-level units a balance of informational and literary texts is included according to guidelines in the CCSS (p. 5).</li> <li>✓ <b>Balance of Writing:</b> Include a balance of on-demand and process writing (e.g., multiple drafts and revisions over time) and short, focused research projects, incorporating digital texts where appropriate.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Text-Based Evidence</b> The lesson includes specifically sequenced text-dependent questions such as in Lesson 1's student response questions "Why were the children's parents/guardians not able to stop their children from joining the militias?" and "What is the author's point of view?" Students need to use textual evidence to answer most discussion questions. There is a variety in the sources including videos, music, poetry, websites, and articles for students to gather evidence. As a final project students are required to decide on a topic to argue and find evidence to support their argument.</p> <p><b>Writing from Sources</b> Students write routinely from sources throughout the unit. Students are expected to produce evidence-based sticky notes, response forms, quick-writes, and a culminating process piece of writing.</p> <p><b>Academic Vocabulary</b> The lessons identify important and rigorous vocabulary within text (tangible, recruit, deploy, etc.) and provide strategic instruction and practice with these terms in lesson steps and within the vocabulary handout. It is particularly exemplary that the developer provides multiple interactions with terms beginning with inferring a definition from context and building to application with questions like "How can someone show tangible progress toward a goal?"</p> <p><b>Text Complexity</b> The unit is sequenced such that the background knowledge gained in lesson 1 reading the news article "Returning Sudanese Child Soldiers Their Childhood" supports comprehension of the more inferential components of the speech and song that are the center of lesson 2.</p> <p><b>Building Disciplinary Knowledge</b> Students analyze both primary and secondary sources to learn about the experience of child soldiers through the texts, video, and illustrations used throughout the lessons.</p> <p><b>Balance of Texts</b> The texts in this unit are all informational, but represent a wide range of types within the genre. There are expository pieces, opinion pieces, lyrics, and news stories. There are other types of media as well, including videos.</p> <p><b>Balance of Writing</b> Routine writing opportunities is a strength of this lesson. Students have various opportunities for on-demand writing (quick writes, exit ticket, journal, and in-class responses) that encourage reflection about themes and characters. The final lesson requires students to write an argumentative paper and includes specific supports for the revision process.</p>
<p>Rating: <b>3 – Meets most to all of the criteria in the dimension</b></p>	

## Dimension III – Instructional Supports

*The lesson/unit is responsive to varied student learning needs:*

- ✓ Cultivates student interest and engagement in reading, writing and speaking about texts.
- ✓ Addresses instructional expectations and is easy to understand and use.
- ✓ Provides *all* students with multiple opportunities to engage with text of appropriate complexity for the grade level; includes appropriate scaffolding so that students directly experience the complexity of the text.
- ✓ Focuses on challenging sections of text(s) and engages students in a productive struggle through discussion questions and other supports that build toward independence.
- ✓ Integrates appropriate supports in reading, writing, listening and speaking for students who are ELL, have disabilities, or read well below the grade level text band.
- ✓ Provides extensions and/or more advanced text for students who read well above the grade level text band.

*A unit or longer lesson should:*

- ✓ Include a progression of learning where concepts and skills advance and deepen over time (*may be more applicable across the year or several units*).
- ✓ Gradually remove supports, requiring students to demonstrate their independent capacities (*may be more applicable across the year or several units*).
- ✓ Provide for authentic learning, application of literacy skills, student-directed inquiry, analysis, evaluation and/or reflection.
- ☐ Integrate targeted instruction in such areas as grammar and conventions, writing strategies, discussion rules and all aspects of foundational reading for grades 3-5.
- ✓ Indicate how students are accountable for independent reading based on student choice and interest to build stamina, confidence and motivation (*may be more applicable across the year or several units*).
- ✓ Use technology and media to deepen learning and draw attention to evidence and texts as appropriate.

### Student Interest

Another strength of the unit is the ability to engage students through the choice of topic. The gallery discussion of child soldiers, which is utilized in lesson one, provides an appropriate hook and continues the engagement throughout the unit by incorporating a hip-hop song, music video and real-life biography. Students have the opportunity to learn about a foreign topic that relates to other children around the world and apply their knowledge to a research project.

### Ease of Use

Embedded links and text associated with video make resources easy to use. Teacher and student resources are clear and easy to follow. A unit overview provides coherence among lessons. Clear instructions start on p4 of Lesson 1 beginning with “Teaching Phase.” With so much great information, it might be helpful for readers if there were links to each day’s Teaching Phase near the top of the lesson (potentially near attachments or below Lesson Content).

### All students engaging with complex text

Each lesson provides an accommodations section that shows where scaffolding is included within the lesson or how teachers might further scaffold (partners, etc.). One example of a particularly effective accommodation is within lesson 1 in which the developer suggests an alternate order of text as one is more complex.

### Challenging sections of text

This is a strength of the unit. Text dependent questions and specific lesson steps that guide readers to engage with text repeatedly ensure that the students will engage with the most challenging concepts within the text. The highlighting annotation technique (Lesson 1) is particularly effective in supporting students to independently understand the most challenging content of the articles.

### Supports for struggling readers

Suggestions are given in lesson 1 for accommodations to students needing additional support through partner reading or an additional article. Day three of Lesson 2 has students viewing Emmanuel Jal’s video and taking notes. The author provides a link to a transcript to for those needing a visual as well.

### Extensions

Extensions are provided which include completing a comparative analysis of child soldiers in Sudan with those in Burma as well as diary entries and research.

### Progression of Learning

Lesson 1 provides much of the background knowledge needed through close reading of a secondary source. This progresses naturally to lesson 2 in which students analyze primary sources and ultimately synthesize learning in a research paper.

### Gradual release of supports

In each lesson, there is a gradual release from whole group, teacher-led activities to independent demonstration of what was learned. The summaries, Cornell Notes, and discussions provide for multiple formative

	<p>assessments. The formal research project allows for a culminating summative piece.</p> <p><b>Authentic Learning Application</b> The application of learning is quite authentic, as is the task in which they're engaged: making a claim about child soldiers and supporting that claim with evidence. Lesson 3 provides opportunities for student directed research and reflection on the topic of child soldiers.</p> <p><b>Integration of Targeted Instruction</b> Lesson 3 integrates instruction in writing strategies and supports such as note cards and peer editing. However, it is not clear within the Teaching Phase how instruction of discussion rules, grammar and conventions is integrated.</p> <p><b>Independent Reading</b> While some prior-knowledge articles and independent research are included, it is not clear how the unit supports an ongoing independent reading program for students.</p> <p><b>Technology</b> This unit is rich with different media sources using technology.</p>
<p><b>Rating: 3 – Meets most to all of the criteria in the dimension</b></p>	

**Dimension IV – Assessment**

<p><i>The lesson/unit regularly assesses whether students are mastering standards-based content and skills:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Elicits direct, observable evidence of the degree to which a student can independently demonstrate the major targeted grade-level CCSS standards with appropriately complex text(s).</li> <li>✓ Assesses student proficiency using methods that are unbiased and accessible to all students.</li> <li>✓ Includes aligned rubrics or assessment guidelines that provide sufficient guidance for interpreting student performance.</li> </ul> <p><u><i>A unit or longer lesson should:</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Use varied modes of assessment, including a range of pre-, formative, summative and self-assessment measures.</li> </ul>	<p>Each lesson includes a section defining Feedback to Students which makes it clear what evidence the lesson elicits and how teachers might respond.</p> <p>Rubrics provided give students the opportunity to assess their own work as well as allow for the proper assessment for the student by the teacher. The lone exception to this is when it comes to writing response questions. The lesson does not provide clear guidance on the expectations for these responses. An exemplar answer for questions may be beneficial.</p> <p>Assessment is mostly accessible to learners, some scaffolds or more variety of text to analyze maybe beneficial when it won't interfere with assessments purpose. In Lesson 3, the assignment description includes a specific number of note cards students are to gather, though this does not clearly align to the rubric. While note cards might be an effective scaffold to gather evidence from multiple sources for some students, teachers might consider providing options for collecting evidence.</p> <p>In the unit, teachers are reminded of places where formative assessment can occur while students work. Clear summative assessment pieces are included in the lesson. Summative assessment for lesson 1 uses the guiding questions to “form a detailed paragraph using evidence from the text.” The Emanuel Jal Paragraph Assignment includes directions and a rubric.</p>
<p><b>Rating: 3 – Meets most to all of the criteria in the dimension</b></p>	

**Summary Comments**

Overall, this is an exemplary unit that supports CCSS-aligned instruction and building understanding of child soldiers through a well-balanced, complex and cohesive set of texts.

Strengths of the unit:

- The unit exemplifies a strong balance of reading, writing, speaking and listening.
- The variety of sources and depth of student-selected text make this a very engaging unit.
- Formative and summative assessments are well-balanced and aligned to CCSS standards targeted.
- Close reading of complex text through text dependent questions and multiple opportunities to engage with text
- Vocabulary development: strategic selection of critical vocabulary and integration of academic vocabulary in culminating writing task

**Rating Scales**

**Rating Scale for Dimensions I, II, III, IV:**

**3:** Meets most to all of the criteria in the dimension

**2:** Meets many of the criteria in the dimension

**1:** Meets some of the criteria in the dimension

**0:** Does not meet the criteria in the dimension

**Overall Rating for the Lesson/Unit:**

**E:** Exemplar – Aligned and meets most to all of the criteria in dimensions II, III, IV **(total 11 – 12)**

**E/I:** Exemplar *if* Improved – Aligned and needs some improvement in one or more dimensions **(total 8 – 10)**

**R:** Revision Needed – Aligned partially and needs significant revision in one or more dimensions **(total 3 – 7)**

**N:** Not Ready to Review – Not aligned and does not meet criteria **(total 0 – 2)**

**Rating Descriptors**

**Descriptors for Dimensions I, II, III, IV:**

**3:** **Exemplifies CCSS Quality** - meets the standard described by criteria in the dimension, as explained in criterion-based observations.

**2:** **Approaching CCSS Quality** - meets many criteria but will benefit from revision in others, as suggested in criterion-based observations.

**1:** **Developing toward CCSS Quality** - needs significant revision, as suggested in criterion-based observations.

**0:** **Not representing CCSS Quality** - does not address the criteria in the dimension.

**Descriptor for Overall Ratings:**

**E:** **Exemplifies CCSS Quality** – Aligned and exemplifies the quality standard and exemplifies most of the criteria across Dimensions II, III, IV of the rubric.

**E/I:** **Approaching CCSS Quality** – Aligned and exemplifies the quality standard in some dimensions but will benefit from some revision in others.

**R:** **Developing toward CCSS Quality** – Aligned partially and approaches the quality standard in some dimensions and needs significant revision in others.

**N:** **Not representing CCSS Quality** – Not aligned and does not address criteria.