

EQulP Review Feedback



Lesson/Unit Name: Close Reading Exemplar: The Great Fire

Content Area: English language arts

Grade Level: 6

Overall Rating:

E/I

Exemplar if Improved

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"> ✓ Targets a set of grade-level CCSS ELA/Literacy standards. ✓ Includes a clear and explicit purpose for instruction. ✓ 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 & B). <p><u><i>A unit or longer lesson should:</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Integrate reading, writing, speaking and listening so that students apply and synthesize advancing literacy skills. <input type="checkbox"/> (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. 	<p>In this lesson students learn about the Great Fire of Chicago while developing career and college-ready skills by engaging in close reading with text-dependent tasks and questions. Students read <i>The Great Fire</i> by Jim Murphy an informational piece with a narrative structure, and use a map and bar graph. The lesson addresses a large set of ELA grade-level standards: 6.1 (textual evidence), 6.2 (central idea), 6.3 (analyze key details), 6.4 (meaning of words), 6.5 (text structure) 6.6 (author's point of view), 6.8 (evaluate argument). While the lesson is able to target some standards (6.1, 6.3, 6.6), others are only, as indicated by the publisher, 'addressed' by a single text-dependent question. For example, RI 6.9 (compare two presentations) is only addressed in optional homework. With a lesson of this length, the developer might consider narrowing the focus or distinguishing between standards that are targeted with focused instruction and those that are merely addressed.</p> <p>The <i>Great Fire</i> by Jim Murphy is of sufficient quality and scope for the stated purpose. A text complexity analysis is included in Appendix E which provides two quantitative measures along with an extensive qualitative analysis. The additional texts included in the appendix (newspapers excerpt) are challenging for this grade level and more comprehension scaffolds are needed to provide students equal access to the text. The developer may reconsider ways to support comprehension of these texts as guided practice rather than as independent practice in the form of optional homework. (See other comments about these texts in dimension 3.)</p>
<p>Rating: 3 – Meets most to all of the criteria in the dimension</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"> ✓ Reading Text Closely: Makes reading text(s) closely, examining textual evidence, and discerning deep meaning a central focus of instruction. ✓ Text-Based Evidence: Facilitates rich and rigorous evidence-based discussions and writing about common texts through a sequence of specific, thought-provoking, and text-dependent questions (including, when applicable, questions about illustrations, charts, diagrams, audio/video, and media). ✓ Writing from Sources: Routinely expects that students draw evidence from texts to produce clear and coherent writing that informs, 	<p>Students read <i>The Great Fire</i> in three chunks, digging deeply into one section per day. The lesson featured a large set of questions, many of which required students to reread and support their answers with text-based evidence. Other questions served a variety of purposes in attempt to address multiple standards, such Day #3 Q#2 inferring author's purpose (RI.6.6).</p> <p>The developer did not specifically identify how the students are to respond to the questions, so it is difficult to determine if and when students are writing during the instructional sequence. Are they to individually answer the questions or are oral strategies to be used? Are there opportunities to have students share their ideas with peers before sharing whole class? The developer leaves these questions open to teacher choice. The developer might consider providing a more structured model for working through the questions. The model developed should focus on the teacher being able to elicit formative feedback from each student to assess comprehension.</p>
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<p>explains, or makes an argument in various written forms (e.g., notes, summaries, short responses, or formal essays).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Academic Vocabulary: Focuses on building students' academic vocabulary in context throughout instruction. <p><i>A unit or longer lesson should:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Increasing Text Complexity: 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. <input type="checkbox"/> Building Disciplinary Knowledge: Provide opportunities for students to build knowledge about a topic or subject through analysis of a coherent selection of strategically sequenced, discipline-specific texts. <input type="checkbox"/> Balance of Texts: Within a collection of grade-level units a balance of informational and literary texts is included according to guidelines in the CCSS (p. 5). <input type="checkbox"/> Balance of Writing: 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. 	<p>The final writing prompt is challenging for sixth grade students in that they have to clearly understand the factors that led to the severity of the fire and then choose reasonable solutions that may mitigate future fires: "Which two changes to the Chicago fire code might have helped lessen the impact of the Great Fire of 1871?" Such a challenging writing activity should be well-supported during instruction that leads to it. The developer might consider whether all students will be able to fairly approach this prompt with the support offered.</p> <p>The chart that links details about Chicago to the potential solutions is a necessary first step for this writing. Completing this chart might be easier if the prompt topic had been introduced to students earlier and parts of the chart were completed each day. If the focus of this part of the lesson is on argumentative writing rather than or reading then this sort of scaffolding appropriately supports the writing focus and mitigates the reading issues that may interfere with students demonstrating their ability to write. The developer might consider the format in which the modern building codes are presented to students: one possibility is providing a copy of these codes for students</p> <p>Although Appendix C provides a comprehensive vocabulary list, there is little guidance from the developer as to appropriate vocabulary instructional strategies. How does the teacher use the rich vocabulary analysis in Appendix C to enhance instruction? How does this Appendix C translate into instructional opportunities for students? The developer might consider including a model of vocabulary-focused instruction as an example for teachers that are hoping to replicate this lesson. One could include examples of how to teach an 'quicker to learn' word as opposed to a 'harder to learn' word.</p>
<p>Rating: 2 – Meets many of the criteria in the dimension</p>	

Dimension III – Instructional Supports

<p><i>The lesson/unit is responsive to varied student learning needs:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Cultivates student interest and engagement in reading, writing and speaking about texts. <input type="checkbox"/> Addresses instructional expectations and is easy to understand and use. ✓ Provides <i>all</i> 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. <input type="checkbox"/> 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. <input type="checkbox"/> Provides extensions and/or more advanced text for students who read well above the grade level text band. 	<p>The lesson's organization is straight-forward and easy to navigate. The table of contents is a lesson plan feature that adds to the ease of use. However, instructional expectations need clarification, specifically examples of instruction to support all teachers. Consider how to support an inexperienced teacher when revising the lesson. Further, consider providing a model that shows how instruction may be varied over the first three days.</p> <p>Although the author provides a rationale, the cold reading strategy paired with the lack of any sort of anticipatory set to explain the purpose of the lesson or set a purpose for reading does little to cultivate student interest. All students are provided multiple opportunities to hear and engage with the text. The developer should consider ways to engage students in the lesson helping them want to engage with the text for a clear purpose of preparing students to do the work of reading closely. The developer should consider introducing the writing purpose, preventing future fires from the outset of the lesson. (See comments in dimension 2).</p> <p>Adequately articulated extensions and supports for readers who excel or struggle are not included in this lesson. Recommendations include grouping strategies and more scaffolded supports for written work. The developer should consider providing clear, explicit directions and instructional strategy models about how the teacher is to work with these</p>
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<p><u><i>A unit or longer lesson should:</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Include a progression of learning where concepts and skills advance and deepen over time (<i>may be more applicable across the year or several units</i>). <input type="checkbox"/> Gradually remove supports, requiring students to demonstrate their independent capacities (<i>may be more applicable across the year or several units</i>). <input type="checkbox"/> Provide for authentic learning, application of literacy skills, student-directed inquiry, analysis, evaluation and/or reflection. <input type="checkbox"/> Integrate targeted instruction in such areas as grammar and conventions, writing strategies, discussion rules and all aspects of foundational reading for grades 3-5. <input type="checkbox"/> Indicate how students are accountable for independent reading based on student choice and interest to build stamina, confidence and motivation (<i>may be more applicable across the year or several units</i>). <input type="checkbox"/> Use technology and media to deepen learning and draw attention to evidence and texts as appropriate. 	<p>students. An opportunity for this would be to provide the writing assignment chart that includes a few completed examples for students</p> <p>The two additional texts provided in the optional homework might provide the raw material to create powerful options for extension for students reading above grade level. Additionally, the developer might consider ways of varying the complexity of the writing assignment for stronger students. (See comments in Dimension 4)</p>
<p>Rating: 1 – Meets some of the criteria in the dimension</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"> ✓ 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). <input type="checkbox"/> Assesses student proficiency using methods that are unbiased and accessible to all students. ✓ Includes aligned rubrics or assessment guidelines that provide sufficient guidance for interpreting student performance. <p><u><i>A unit or longer lesson should:</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Use varied modes of assessment, including a range of pre-, formative, summative and self-assessment measures. 	<p>There is an alignment between the standards and the assessments that extends through the formative assessment to the summative writing and multiple choice assessments. Formative assessment measures include the text dependent questions that can be monitored by the teacher during discussions. In the 'flexibility' section, teachers are asked to vary the use of these questions and how students respond either orally or in writing.</p> <p>In Dimension III it was noted that no additional supports were provided for ELL's, struggling readers, and students with disabilities. In light of the limited opportunities for these students to access the text and the assessments are not unbiased. For additional assessment support, the developer could offer teachers an alternative way to use the evidence collection chart, page 21. It was provided in the teacher's section and also in the student resources. This could be used during the four/five days of the lessons and then used to provide evidence during the writing assignment. Depending on how this collection tool is used the teacher can monitor how and what evidence students are providing from the text.</p> <p>A mini-assessment designed as a culminating activity for students to complete after the lesson set was provided. The questions are aligned to the CCSS reading standards and illustrate implications of the CCSS for assessment. The questions included in the mini-assessment are text-dependent and require close reading and analysis of the excerpt. An answer key is provided for the teacher of the mini-assessment. The text dependent questions all provide a suggested response.</p> <p>A writing prompt is also used for assessment. Students reread a section of the text and brainstorm answers to the prompt. A note-taker captures the thinking of the group and post their responses. During a subsequent class</p>
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	<p>period the students complete the argument essay. The direction to “construct an argument with a clear beginning, middle, and end describing the two changes you would make,” will be confusing to students who normally associate a beginning, middle and end with narrative writing. The developer must consider whether this is truly argumentative writing or explanatory writing and then choose appropriate prompt language for the writing type. Further, this prompt lends itself to several levels of writing, from a full essay to simply listing two changes and supporting each with reasons as to why they would help. The developer might consider options for differentiation here. This is particularly true if the writing is simply to be the draft piece of writing suggested by the 25-30 minute timeframe. The writing prompt does provide suggestions of possible approaches students could take in the essay. For the students to monitor their writing, it is recommended a rubric be included.</p>
<p>Rating: 2 – Meets many of the criteria in the dimension</p>	

Summary Comments

<p>This lesson received a total of 8 points on the rating scale which indicates that with revision this lesson could be considered an exemplar. Specific areas and suggestions for revision are in the narrative feedback section included with each dimension.</p> <p>The strengths of this lesson include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -clear and specific purpose for instruction -focuses instruction on a well-written and appropriately complex text -makes reading text closely and providing evidence from this text central to instruction -focuses on challenging sections of the text using close reading and text-dependent questioning strategies -includes opportunities to develop formative assessments to inform and drive instruction -includes a summative assessment aligned to the targeted standards and purpose of instruction <p>Suggestions for revision are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -a smaller selection of focus standards, or a differentiation between target and supporting standards -strategies to cultivate students' engagement or provide a purpose for learning -additional articulation of instructional expectations to support inexperienced teachers -careful consideration of the desired genre of writing prompt response -more support throughout the instruction to support the summative writing assignment -inclusions of appropriate supports in reading, writing, speaking and listening for students reading below grade-level -extensions and/or alternate texts for students reading above the grade level
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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.