

# EQulP Review Feedback



**Lesson/Unit Name:** How Great was Alexander the Great

**Content Area:** English language arts

**Grade Level:** 6

**Overall Rating:**

**E/I**

Exemplar of 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"> <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><i>A unit or longer lesson should:</i></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>The unit targets a set of grade-level CCSS ELA/Literacy Standards including:</p> <p>RH.6-8.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.</p> <p>RH.6-8.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.</p> <p>RH.6-8.5 Describe how a text presents information (e.g., sequentially, comparatively, causally).</p> <p>RH.6-8.6 Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).</p> <p>RH.6-8.7 Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.</p> <p>RH.6-8.8 Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text.</p> <p>RH.6-8.9 Analyze the relationship between a primary and secondary source on the same topic.</p> <p>The summative assessment targets WHST.6-8.1 Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content. CCSS for Literacy appear to be met throughout the activities, with the exception of lack of evidence of using counterclaims in the essay. The other standard that does not seem well met is RH.6-8.5; there is no question or activity to help students achieve this standard. Developers might consider inserting an activity or questions that asks students to describe how information is presented in a text to improve alignment to RH.6-8.5. Idaho history goals are identified &amp; seem to be met through the unit.</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 sequence of specific, thought-provoking, and text-dependent questions (including, when applicable, questions about illustrations, charts, diagrams, audio/video, and media).</li> </ul>	<p>The lesson identifies places where students perform reading of documents, writing in response to prompts, and speaking and listening through whole and small group discussions on Days 1 and 3. In addition, the unit integrates listening skills through watching a documentary. Under the Description and Goals and Objectives, a clear and explicit purpose for instruction is clearly stated. The unit asks students to read texts closely to identify and to use text-based evidence to support or to refute the characterization of Alexander as "Great." Through text-dependent questions, students truly begin to form their opinion and essay. The format of certain questions with certain passages that asks students - "how was Alexander not a great" is a good shift in thinking for students to make. The unit provides multiple sources including a map, a documentary, a list of Alexander's accomplishments, and two secondary accounts. Reading</p>
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<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>scaffolds from class to group to independence within three days, and writing is met through text-dependent questions connected to the various texts. The Lexile of Document 2, Alexander's Legacy, is 860 in the 4-5 grade range. The Lexile of Document 3, The Legend of the Helmet, is 1130 in the 6-8 grade band. Overall, the texts are appropriate for the lower end of the grade band. Finally, students are asked to produce multiple drafts and revision over time to produce a final draft.</p> <p>Reviewers noted the following suggestions:</p> <p>While the expectation that students will read texts closely is implicit in the assignment, reviewers noted a lack of evidence for close reading or text-based instruction. On Day Two, "students are introduced to the background, accomplishments, and eventual Hellenistic movement surrounding the life of Alexander the Great from the text as led by discussion." On Day Three, "[a]s a large group, students, as led by the teacher, will close read the first document and discuss its importance, accuracy, and overall usefulness in being able to help answer the writing prompt question." The reliance on discussion limits the reading as the way that deep meaning is discerned. Also, "deep meaning" is the indicator on the rubric. Reviewers question how deeply do students go with the sources provided for them? The questions that follow the documents ask either simple comprehension questions "What three continents does this map show?" and "Who is the speaker in this recorded document?" or it asks students to make sophisticated inferences about how the document can be linked to the summative writing prompt "How many times does the name Alexandria appear on the map? What conclusion can be drawn from this fact?" and "How probable is it that some of the information about the legacy of Alexander the Great and his men could have changed over the years?" Reviewers question whether students are able to make these inferential leaps without more explicit line of questioning. Provide samples of "thought-provoking" discussion questions or line of questioning could improve alignment.</p> <p>In terms of writing from vocabulary, aside from the inclusion of a vocabulary list on page 4 and acknowledgment that "Individual vocabulary and other key ideas and terms can be explored during the discussion with students, as needed" during day one/two, there is little vocabulary instruction. Other than the word "great" students are not instructed to utilize the vocabulary in their writing in answering the questions that follow the documents or the final summative writing assignment.</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"> <li>✓ Cultivates student interest and engagement in reading, writing and speaking about texts.</li> <li>✓ Addresses instructional expectations and is easy to understand and use.</li> <li>❑ 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.</li> </ul>	<p>The unit begins by asking students "What is greatness?" and to "individually determine someone they know that meets their current definition of 'great'" which appeals to student interest and experience. The unit addresses explicit instructional expectations, is straightforward and easy to use. There is an extension for "[students] who complete their assignments early [to] do additional research into the other battles of Alexander the Great and his treatment of people in those battles" to "see if the additional information changes their opinion." The summative writing assignment offers students the opportunity to apply literacy skills, and there are opportunities for students to direct their own inquiry and evaluation of the topic. Finally, the unit uses technology via the inclusion of</p>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Focuses on challenging sections of text(s) and engages students in a productive struggle through discussion questions and other supports that build toward independence.</li> <li>✓ 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.</li> <li>✓ Provides extensions and/or more advanced text for students who read well above the grade level text band.</li> </ul> <p><u>A unit or longer lesson should:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><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>).</li> <li><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>).</li> <li>✓ Provide for authentic learning, application of literacy skills, student-directed inquiry, analysis, evaluation and/or reflection.</li> <li><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.</li> <li>✓ 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>).</li> <li>✓ Use technology and media to deepen learning and draw attention to evidence and texts as appropriate.</li> </ul>	<p>the documentary on YouTube as one of the sources for the summative writing.</p> <p>As stated before, the complexity of the text does not scaffold appropriately to allow students to explore the nuanced inferences needed to use the documents to support both sides of the summative writing prompt. There is little evidence of a focus on challenging sections of text that engage students in productive struggle. While there are whole group and small group discussions, questions on the documents, and a graphic organizer as a pre-writing tool, reviewers question whether these are appropriate. Reviewers also wonder about how Alexander's depiction in Document 3 could support and refute his characterization as Great, especially considering the aforementioned lack of direct instruction mentioned.</p> <p>Overall, reviewers considered the opportunity to build disciplinary knowledge brief. The acquisition of academic vocabulary could be reinforced throughout the unit and it is not. Also, reviewers cannot watch the video because the link is not working, which would be problematic when teaching the lesson.</p> <p>Reviewers agreed that multiple drafts and revision qualify as a balance of writing. Additional opportunities for on-demand writing aligned to the summative performance task would strengthen overall alignment of this criterion.</p>
<p>Rating: 2 – Meets many 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"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 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><input type="checkbox"/> 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>A unit or longer lesson should:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Use varied modes of assessment, including a range of pre-, formative, summative and self-assessment measures.</li> </ul>	<p>The unit includes an aligned rubric for interpreting student performance. However, despite a general alignment between the summative assessment and unit instruction, the unit lacks evidence that a student can independently demonstrate grade level standards with appropriately complex texts. Much of the text analysis comes through discussion involving the teacher and other students. Also, only one of the texts is appropriately complex for the grade band.</p> <p>Moreover, reviewers note that the central question How Great was Alexander the Great does not quite align to the argument standard. The question “How great?” implies measures of degrees of greatness, which is an extremely nuanced question that would take a great deal of sophisticated analysis to parse. At the 6-8th grade band, reviewers wonder what the answers to the question would be: Alexander was very great? Pretty great? Sorta great? Not so great? What would these mean? To strengthen alignment to this dimension, consider adjusting the focus of the assignment. Perhaps students could look at areas in which Alexander was or was not great. Better yet, we accept that Alexander was Great. Perhaps</p>
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	<p>the assessment could ask Why? Is it the land he conquered? Is it the legends and stories? Is it the influence on culture? Which best exemplifies his greatness?</p> <p>Also, regarding the grading rubric, reviewers wonder what constitutes the difference between "somewhat" and "occasionally" &amp; "some" vs. "limited?" Consider quantifying what goes under the indicators to eliminate judgment or bias while grading. Also, while formative and summative assessments are outlined used, self-assessment is included on Day 10 but does not assess involvement of the unit as a whole. Perhaps reviewers might incorporate a pre-assessment to see if students have already mastered the skills, and revise self-assessment to reflect entire unit.</p>
<p>Rating: <b>2 – Meets many of the criteria in the dimension</b></p>	

## Summary Comments

The total score is a 9. The developer should resubmit materials taking into account the suggestions for improvement. The unit targets CCSS standards, and the overall organization and structure of the unit plan ensures that the clear and explicit purpose of the unit continues throughout. The unit does integrate reading, writing, speaking and listening and provides multiple entry points for diverse learners. The unit focuses on the shifts of the CCSS by having students examine text closely, use text based evidence, and write from sources. In addition, the unit uses a balance of texts and of writing demands using texts that increase in complexity. Academic vocabulary instruction can be strengthened throughout the unit. By having such a well-defined, well-formatted lesson, students going through the unit will have focus and success. The unit does cultivate student interest and integrates supports for learners at different levels. The lesson also includes an extension, uses technology through the use of a documentary and indicates how students are accountable for independent reading and research. Reviewers found that alignment to Dimension IV Assessment aligned to the least criteria. However, by addressing the few minor concerns stated in the comments, the unit will be exemplary and will allow for the success of all learners.

### 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.