

EQuIP Review Feedback



Lesson/Unit Name: Freedom: Comparative Reading and Writing (Parts 1, 2 and 3)

Content Area: English language arts

Grade Level: 6

Overall Rating:

E/I

Exemplar if Improved

Dimension I – Alignment to the Depth of the CCSS

The lesson/unit aligns with the letter and spirit of the CCSS:

- ✓ 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).

A unit or longer lesson should:

- ✓ Integrate reading, writing, speaking and listening so that students apply and synthesize advancing literacy skills.
- ☐ (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.

The standards are identified and target a set of grade-level CCSS ELA/Literacy standards. LAFS.6.RL.1.2, LAFS.6.RL.2.4 and LAFS.6.W.3.9 are clearly identified in the lesson 1. LAFS.6.RL.1.1, LAFS.6.RL.1.2, LAFS.6.RL.2.4, LAFS.6.RL.3.9 and LAFS.6.RI.1.2 are addressed in lesson 2. LAFS.6.W.4.10, LAFS.6.W.3.9, LAFS.6.W.2.4, LAFS.6.W.1.1 are addressed in lesson 3. While it is unclear if the lessons are meant to be evaluated individually or as a unit, it would be beneficial to see unit objectives so that the standards could be carried out over the entire three lessons.

The purpose of the piece is clearly identified for each lesson. Lesson one notes, "Students will need this evidence for the essay they will produce in lesson three of this unit. The goal of that essay is for students to explain their concept of freedom and explain whether or not these poems support their interpretation. The teacher should guide students towards collecting evidence that will help them to answer this prompt later." This is a great way to help identify the purpose for the teacher. It is unclear if this information is intended to be made completely transparent for students initially. Doing so would help to focus both the instruction and the learning.

Combining an overview of the unit will allow the purpose to be carried out over the entire unit rather than addressing each lesson separately. Again, an overview stating the overall purpose for the unit would assist teachers in targeting instruction and focusing student learning.

The developers should take note that there are occasions when 7th grade expectations are articulated in this 6th grade lesson, such as in "The People Can Fly". While the text is rich and complex it is unclear if it is aligned to the appropriate grade level. When following the link for "The People Could Fly," the narrative and standards are labeled as 7th grade. The text is appropriate as it is high interest and complex, but with assistance can easily be understood. The labeling of the 7th grade standards must be addressed. This could be misleading to the educator.

There is a description of all considerations of the complexity of most of the texts. The authors of this unit considered quantitative measures, qualitative features and the match of the readers and the task. For example, Part 2 of this unit states, "...the folktale "The People Could Fly" is being used with grade 6 students. The Lexile for this text is 540. Although the Lexile is low, the qualitative measures and reader and task considerations increase the complexity of the text. The Lexile for the passage by Nelson Mandela is a 1250. Students work on the Mandela passage with support from the teacher and their peers." It would be helpful if the authors would indicate some of the complexity traits of the poems in Part 1 in the same fashion.

Students are often engaged in the integration of reading, writing, speaking and listening within this unit of study. Some evidence of this includes the

sharing of journal entries with partners in Part 1, the discussion of literary elements in "The People Could Fly" in Part 2, the conversation around the text markings done in Part 2 and the peer revision discussions in Part 3.

Rating: 3 – Meets most to all of the criteria in the dimension

Dimension II – Key Shifts the CCSS

The lesson/unit addresses key shifts in the CCSS:

- 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, explains, or makes an argument in various written forms (e.g., notes, summaries, short responses, or formal essays).
- ✓ **Academic Vocabulary:** Focuses on building students' academic vocabulary in context throughout instruction.

A unit or longer lesson should:

- 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.
- 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.
 - ✓ **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).
 - ✓ **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.

Students closely examine textual evidence to help form their claim regarding their views of freedom. The reading is the central focus of the lessons and students are given the opportunity to read text multitude times. It is unclear as to whether the student is simply gathering textual evidence and identifying specific quotes rather than truly discerning the deeper meaning of the text. As the students gather evidence from the text it should lend to developing a deeper understanding of the text and move past identifying. An indication of the lack of divergent thinking options is in Part 1, in the Feedback Section, when the authors state, "...guide students towards correct interpretation of the poem." The word "correct" indicates that there is only one answer and does not allow multiple viewpoints or a variety of analysis.

The text has the ability to provide rich and rigorous evidence-based discussion about the text. There are some text dependent questions listed to guide students in Part 2. The questions, however, often feel as though they are checking comprehension and not truly pushing students to grapple with the text to uncover deeper understandings. In some cases students are asked very literal questions, requiring simple identification rather than higher order thinking skills. (i.e. "What are the other literary elements in this story: figurative language, sensory language, symbol, mood, tone?") In addition, some of the questions listed could be answered without ever having read the text. (i.e. "How can individuals tell if they are free? What different factors can affect one's freedom?") The suggestion would be the creation of a series of text-dependent questions to assist students in moving more into deep analysis.

The teacher routinely expects students to draw evidence from texts to produce clear and coherent writing. The journal prompts written in lesson one draw on background knowledge regarding how the students viewed freedom. This was an initial concern, as it was unclear whether the students would allow their own personal opinion to be the primary focus of the writing rather than allowing the evidence to guide their discovery. Later the students are asked to add evidence from the text to either support or contradict their personal opinion. It needs to be made clear to both teacher and students that this initial writing is not merely a starting point to gather evidence for what is already thought. One of the shifts of the Common Core requires students to use evidence to "form" thoughts, not just "support" existing thoughts. The teachers should express to students that their ideas about freedom will be evolving and maturing as they progress through this unit. A specific suggestion to ensure that this is highlighted would be the inclusion of self-reflection exit slips, where students reflect on the evolution of their thinking about freedom based on their reading. If done in this manner, a balance of personal connection and using evidence to form a claim will be offered.

Both academic and discipline specific vocabulary are recommended prior to instruction in Lesson 1. In Part 2, modeling of strategies to determine meaning of unknown words is recommended. The lesson states, "...model for students use of different strategies (context clues, Greek or Latin affixes

and roots, and/or use of a dictionary) to determine the meanings for a few of the words students struggled with. After modeling for a few words, the teacher can allow students time to work with a partner to use some of the strategies to determine the meanings of a few words on their own." The developers might want to consider highlighting academic vocabulary and teaching it within context of the actual reading.

While the student has many opportunities to read and discuss a variety of text, it is unclear as to whether the student is truly analyzing the text. Students should be able to grapple with text as they build their knowledge about a subject. Students never truly are given the opportunity to analyze the text and develop their own ideas of the meaning of the poem. As the students progress with the text, the instructor should be able to remove support and allow students to develop their own understanding of the text.

Many times the students are asked to identify quotes from the text, but it seems to only serve as an identification piece. In lesson two in the feedback section, it states " This feedback should guide students towards correct interpretation of the poem." If the students are given the opportunity to truly analyze the text, they should understand that there is no correct interpretation of the poem and with support and evidence from the poetry, they can discern their own meaning. Students analyze poetic and literary elements and figurative language verbally with the same partner with whom they shared their journal entry.

There are several collections of balanced text in this unit. These offer a variety of genre on a similar topic. At minimum, there are poems, a folktale, and nonfiction pieces read. The poetry used, " Words Like Freedom," "Sympathy" along with "Nelson Mandela Reflects on Working toward Peace" and "The People Could Fly" provide opportunities for rich interaction with varied text.

There is evidence of balanced writing. The unit provides for opportunities for the student to write their exit tickets, t-charts, and evidence based essay. There is evidence of multiple drafts and opportunities for revision in this unit. Having students review their partner's essay in stages, as addressed in lesson 3, allows students to not only provide revisions but clarify their own understanding of the assignment.

Rating: 2 – Meets many of the criteria in the dimension

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

The different genres presented in the unit definitely help to build interest and motivation in the topics. The journal prompts also allow for personal knowledge and interest. The writing prompt also allows for student interest supported by the text based evidence. Although this is engaging, it is important to remind students that the evidence should guide their claim in the writing piece rather than the personal opinion supported by the evidence. Adding evidence from the text cultivates this motivation into the reading, additional writing and speaking.

The general format of the lesson is very user-friendly and resources are easily accessible.

One note: There are times when the placement of assessment and accommodation pieces at the end of the lesson feels disjointed. It would be helpful if these pieces were fully embedded within the lesson sequentially. It

<p>supports that build toward independence.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 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. <p><u>A unit or longer lesson should:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 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>). ☐ Gradually remove supports, requiring students to demonstrate their independent capacities (<i>may be more applicable across the year or several units</i>). ✓ 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 (<i>may be more applicable across the year or several units</i>). ☐ Use technology and media to deepen learning and draw attention to evidence and texts as appropriate. 	<p>is understandable that these sections are important. A suggestion would be to do some sort of formatting to make these embedded pieces gain the attention they deserve. (i.e. A possibility would be to place the assessment pieces into a text box and italicize the accommodations to make them stand out.) Much as the notes are integrated into the lesson, the lessons would benefit from doing the same with the additional resources.</p> <p>The unit provides all students with multiple opportunities to engage with text of appropriate complexity. There are times when the text is read aloud, allowing all students access. The use of student discourse does permit all students the opportunity to engage in grade appropriate complex text. All of the texts are treated equally and a focus on most difficult portions is not noted. As mentioned in prior Dimension, there is also a concern about allowing students the chance to grapple with the text to discern deeper meaning of the text. While the student has many opportunities to read and discuss a variety of text it is unclear as to whether the student is truly analyzing the text. Students should be able to grapple with text as they build their knowledge about a subject. Students never truly are given the opportunity to analyze the text and develop their own ideas of the meaning of the poem. As the students progress with the text, the instructor should be able to remove support and allow students to develop their own understanding of the text. The scaffolding needs to be removed gradually so that students can truly analyze the piece and form their own opinions regarding the meaning based on their text based evidence. The students are not often given the opportunity to struggle with the text.</p> <p>The unit integrates appropriate supports for students who are ELL, have disabilities, or read well below the grade level text band. There are modifications provided in each lesson to accommodate the needs of these students. Graphic organizers, translation dictionaries and modification of assignments are provided for those students in need. The unit also provides extensions and/or more advanced text for students who read well above the grade level text band. These extensions include completing a Venn diagram or reading an additional more complex piece of poetry. The extensions do not seem to present opportunities for students to dive deeper into their understanding of the content or progress in proficiency of the targeted standards. Often they are merely additional activities (i.e. Part 1 suggests students compare/contrast visual images in a Powerpoint or Prezi.)</p> <p>This unit includes a progression of learning where concepts and skills advance and deepen over time. The writing/revision of the initial draft of the journal response is one example of how this lesson builds upon the learning and thinking of previous lessons. Another example is an intentional progression of learning noted with parenthetical citations in Part 3. From the beginning of the unit, students are required to note page, stanza and line numbers. This allows for the transfer of this information into a more standard format for citation.</p> <p>There are instances when the teacher is modeling a skill or strategy. For example, Part 2 recommends the teacher model strategies students could use to determine the meaning of unknown words. Another example of the gradual release is the peer review opportunities offered in Part 3. This indicator was not credited, however, because the teacher is often the person responsible for most of the work. The teacher provides a great deal of support throughout the lesson. The lesson provides a detailed graphic organizer for the essay that basically tells the students what to write and does not allow for individuality. The student is not given the opportunity to really demonstrate what they know as they are simply plugging in</p>
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	<p>information based on what the teacher instructed them to do. This is a fantastic support for a struggling student but an average to advanced learner should be given more flexibility to demonstrate their understanding of the text.</p> <p>A strength of this unit is the unique use of the personal connection at the onset... with the constant revision of this initial thought based upon evidence from texts. Again, a focus needs to be made to be sure students are truly analyzing and evaluating their own thoughts and making adjustments based on what is read.</p> <p>Suggestions for mini-lessons are offered, such as parenthetical documentation prior to Part 3.</p> <p>On occasion, some confusion of literacy terms are noted. For example, in Part 2, the Mandela Rhetorical Triangle and Outline asks students to locate 6 "main ideas" instead of "key points". Another example of this is in Part 3 when the terms "opinion/argument; and claim/statement" are used interchangeably</p> <p>There is no indication as to how this unit will account for independent reading based on student choice. Students should be given the opportunity to choose text that will enhance their understanding and build stamina, confidence and motivation.</p> <p>There is limited use of technology in this unit. Technology is mentioned several times in the unit, but only within the context of the teacher's use or during an extension. There is no mention of technology being utilized to foster the learning. The teacher often utilizes technology in the instruction but it is not utilized by the student. The technology and media is not used to deepen learning and draw attention to evidence and text.</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"> <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). <input type="checkbox"/> Assesses student proficiency using methods that are unbiased and accessible to all students. <input type="checkbox"/> 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"> ✓ Use varied modes of assessment, including a range of pre-, formative, summative and self-assessment measures. 	<p>The different genres presented in the unit definitely help to build interest and motivation in the topics. The journal prompts also allow for personal knowledge and interest. The writing prompt also allows for student interest supported by the text based evidence. Although this is engaging, it is important to remind students that the evidence should guide their claim in the writing piece rather than the personal opinion supported by the evidence. Adding evidence from the text cultivates this motivation into the reading, additional writing and speaking.</p> <p>The general format of the lesson is very user-friendly and resources are easily accessible.</p> <p>One note: There are times when the placement of assessment and accommodation pieces at the end of the lesson feels disjointed. It would be helpful if these pieces were fully embedded within the lesson sequentially. It is understandable that these sections are important. A suggestion would be to do some sort of formatting to make these embedded pieces gain the attention they deserve. (i.e. A possibility would be to place the assessment pieces into a text box and italicize the accommodations to make them stand out.) Much as the notes are integrated into the lesson, the lessons would benefit from doing the same with the additional resources.</p> <p>The unit provides all students with multiple opportunities to engage with</p>
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evidence from texts. Again, a focus needs to be made to be sure students are truly analyzing and evaluating their own thoughts and making adjustments based on what is read.

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Rating: 1 – Meets some of the criteria in the dimension

Summary Comments

This unit is a solid one, offering a good model for other lessons. With some revisions, this unit would fall within the "Exemplar" range. This unit received a rating of 8, placing it within the "Exemplar if Improved" category.

Strengths of this unit include:

- The chosen texts would allow for rigorous conversation and writing. (See detailed comments in Dimension I.)
- The developers of this unit make the content relevant for students with the initial Journal Writing. This encourages engagement and motivation. (See detailed comments in Dimensions II and III.)
- There is a balance of both texts and writing. (See detailed comments in Dimension III.)
- This unit offers many suggestions for formative assessments. (See detailed comments in Dimension IV.)
- A strength of this unit is the recommendation of accommodations for striving readers. (See detailed comments in Dimension III.)

Suggestions for improvement include:

- The creation of an overview, intentionally stating targeted overall standards and purpose. (See detailed comments in Dimension I.)
- Increase the rigor of expectations for students with the independent reading and writing. (See detailed comments in Dimensions II, III and IV.)
- Gradually remove supports so students move toward independent proficiency of the targeted standards. (See detailed comments in Dimension III.)
- Be cautious to clearly highlight the evolution of thinking by the students. Be sure from the onset that the text drives the creation of thought rather just supporting initial opinion by students. (See detailed comments in Dimensions II and III.)
- Move away from the rigid graphic organizer to allow for creativity and expression in the writing piece.

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.