

# INTRODUCTION TO INTERPRETIVE WORK

## TEACHER GUIDE



GRADE 8

# Introduction to Interpretive Work

Grade 8



## Introduction to Argument: Writing About Literature



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# Table of Contents

Common Core Connection	5
At-A-Glance	9
Understanding the Features	13
Introduction	17
Planning Ahead	18
1 Introducing “Everyday Use”: Comprehension Work	21
2 “Everyday Use”: Wrapping Up the Comprehension Work	25
3 Introducing Interpretive Assignment #1	29
<i>Establishing a Strong Culture of Discussion</i>	32
4 Interpretive Assignment #1: Whole-Class Discussion	33
<i>I-A Articulating the Qualities of Interpretive Writing (Optional Intersession)</i>	37
5 Interpretive Assignment #1: Drafting Interpretations	41
<i>Next Steps for Student Writing</i>	46
<i>The Error Journal: A Quick-Start Guide</i>	47
<i>I-B Introducing the Style Manual and Its Contents</i>	49
<i>Teaching Guidelines for Marking Papers</i>	56
<i>I-C Setting Up and Learning to Use the Error Journal</i>	57
<i>I-D Using the Style Manual During Error Journal Work</i>	61
6 Introducing “It’s That It Hurts”: Comprehension Work	63
7 “It’s That It Hurts”: Wrapping Up the Comprehension Work	67
8 Introducing Interpretive Assignment #2	71
9 Interpretive Assignment #2: Whole-Class Discussion	75
10 Studying Drafts, Composing Drafts	79
<i>Next Steps for Student Writing</i>	84
Works Cited	85
<b>Appendix</b>	<b>87</b>
Criteria for a Good Discussion	88
Modeling Reading Strategies: What, How, and When	89
Interpretive Assignment #1: Writing About “Everyday Use”	91
Checklist for Interpretive/Argument Writing	92
A Note On Using Rubrics	93
Rubric for Interpretive/Argument Writing	94
Interpretive Assignment #2: Writing About “It’s That It Hurts”	95
Scaffolds and Modifications: Descriptions and Use	96



INTRODUCTION TO  
INTERPRETIVE WORK

# Common Core Connection

Common Core State Standards for grade eight that students are focusing on during this unit of study:

## **Reading Standards for Literature**

Reading Literature 1 — Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

Reading Literature 2 — Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.

Reading Literature 3 — Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision.

Reading Literature 4 — Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including analogies or allusions to other texts.

## **Writing Standards**

Writing 1 — Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

- A. Introduce claim(s), acknowledge alternate or opposing claims, and organize the reasons and evidence logically.
- B. Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant evidence, using accurate, credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text.
- C. Use words, phrases, and clauses to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.

D. Establish and maintain a formal style.

E. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.

Writing 4 — Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Writing 5 — With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed.

Writing 9 — Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

A. Apply *grade 8 Reading standards* to literature (e.g., "Analyze how a modern work of fiction draws on themes, patterns of events, or character types from myths, traditional stories, or religious works such as the Bible, including describing how the material is rendered new").

Writing 10 — Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

### **Speaking and Listening Standards**

Speaking and Listening 1 — Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on Grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

A. Come to discussions prepared, having read or researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence on the topic, text, or issue to probe and reflect on ideas under discussion.

B. Follow rules for collegial discussions, track progress toward specific goals and deadlines, and define individual roles as needed.

C. Pose questions that elicit elaboration and respond to others' questions and comments with relevant observations and ideas that bring the discussion back on topic as needed.

D. Acknowledge new information expressed by others and, when warranted, modify their own views.

Speaking and Listening 3 — Delineate a speaker's argument and specific claims, evaluating the soundness of the reasoning and relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.

Speaking and Listening 4 — Present claims and findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with relevant evidence, sound valid reasoning, and well-chosen details; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.

Speaking and Listening 6 — Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

### **Language Standards**

Language 1 — Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

Language 2 — Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

Language 3 — Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.

Language 4 — Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words or phrases based on grade 8 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

- A. Use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence or paragraph; a word's position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.
- B. Use common, grade-appropriate Greek or Latin affixes and roots as clues to the meaning of a word (e.g., *precede*, *recede*, *secede*).
- C. Consult general and specialized reference materials (e.g., dictionaries, glossaries, thesauruses), both print and digital, to find the pronunciation of a word or determine or clarify its precise meaning or its part of speech.
- D. Verify the preliminary determination of the meaning of a word or phrase (e.g., by checking the inferred meaning in context or in a dictionary).

Language 5 — Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

- A. Interpret figures of speech (e.g. verbal irony, puns) in context.
- B. Use the relationship between particular words to better understand each of the words.
- C. Distinguish among the connotations (associations) of words with similar denotations (definitions) (e.g., *bullheaded*, *willful*, *firm*, *persistent*, *resolute*).

Language 6 — Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases; gather vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.





# At-A-Glance

Session	Guiding Questions	Agenda	Stds.
<b>Session 1</b> <b>Introducing</b> <b>“Everyday Use”:</b> <b>Comprehension Work</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are some strategies for comprehending a fictional text?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students will listen to “Everyday Use” and read along silently, marking the text and making notes in the margin of their student reader.</li> <li>Students will work with partners to craft a synopsis of the story that accounts for characters, key moments, and basic plot development.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RL.8.2</li> <li>RL.8.4</li> <li>SL.8.1</li> <li>L.8.4</li> <li>L.8.5</li> </ul>
<b>Session 2</b> <b>“Everyday Use”:</b> <b>Wrapping Up the</b> <b>Comprehension Work</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are some strategies for comprehending a fictional text?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students will reread “Everyday Use.”</li> <li>Students will work in small groups to confirm or revise their synopsis of the story that accounts for characters, key moments, and basic plot development.</li> <li>Students will identify and share moments in the text they consider important.</li> <li>Students will reflect on the comprehension work they have been doing by quick-writing and discussing their answers to the following questions: “What are the things you did to answer this question and what was the order—as best you can remember—in which you did them?”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RL.8.2</li> <li>RL.8.4</li> <li>SL.8.1</li> <li>L.8.4</li> <li>L.8.5</li> </ul>
<b>Session 3</b> <b>Introducing</b> <b>Interpretive</b> <b>Assignment #1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What do you do in order to form an interpretation?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students will form and discuss an interpretation of “Everyday Use” in small groups, responding to the question: At the end of the story, Maggie smiles— “But a real smile, not scared.” Why isn’t Maggie scared anymore?</li> <li>Students will reference the text to support their interpretations.</li> <li>Students will take notes about their own and their classmates’ interpretations, to help them with the interpretive writing to come.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RL.8.1</li> <li>RL.8.2</li> <li>RL.8.3</li> <li>SL.8.1</li> <li>SL.8.3</li> <li>SL.8.6</li> </ul>
<b>Session 4</b> <b>Interpretive</b> <b>Assignment #1:</b> <b>Whole-Class</b> <b>Discussion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What do you do in order to form an interpretation?</li> <li>How can you contribute to a whole-class interpretive discussion?</li> <li>How is forming an interpretation different from responding to a comprehension question?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students will quickly compose an initial written response to the question: At the end of the story, Maggie smiles—“But a real smile, not scared.” Why isn’t Maggie scared anymore?</li> <li>Students will participate in a whole-class discussion, trying to answer the same question.</li> <li>Students will take notes about the points and ideas raised during the discussion.</li> <li>Students will think about and identify what they learned about the text that they didn’t know before the discussion.</li> <li>Students will reflect upon and share out their ideas regarding the process of forming interpretations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RL.8.1</li> <li>RL.8.2</li> <li>RL.8.3</li> <li>W.8.1</li> <li>SL.8.1</li> <li>SL.8.3</li> <li>SL.8.4</li> <li>SL.8.6</li> </ul>
<b>Session 5</b> <b>Interpretive</b> <b>Assignment #1:</b> <b>Drafting</b> <b>Interpretations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What do you do in order to form an interpretation?</li> <li>How is forming an interpretation different from responding to a comprehension question?</li> <li>How do you draft a good interpretive paper?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students will discuss in small groups “How is forming an interpretation different from responding to a comprehension question?”</li> <li>Students will learn that a good written interpretation has three parts:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A clear interpretive claim.</li> <li>Textual evidence that supports the claim.</li> <li>A compelling explanation that says how the evidence supports the claim.</li> </ol> </li> <li>Students will write interpretive papers.</li> <li>Students will reflect upon the progress they make with the interpretive papers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RL.8.1</li> <li>RL.8.2</li> <li>RL.8.3</li> <li>W.8.1</li> <li>W.8.4</li> <li>W.8.5</li> <li>W.8.9</li> <li>SL.8.1</li> </ul>

Session	Guiding Questions	Agenda	Stds.
<b>Session 6</b> <b>Introducing</b> <b>“It’s That It Hurts”:</b> <b>Comprehension Work</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are some strategies for comprehending a fictional text?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students will listen to “It’s That It Hurts” and read along silently, marking the text and making notes in the margin of their student reader.</li> <li>Students will work with partners to craft a synopsis of the story that accounts for characters, key moments, and basic plot development.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RL.8.2</li> <li>RL.8.4</li> <li>SL.8.1</li> <li>L.8.4</li> <li>L.8.5</li> </ul>
<b>Session 7</b> <b>“It’s That It Hurts”:</b> <b>Wrapping Up the</b> <b>Comprehension Work</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are some strategies for comprehending a fictional text?</li> <li>In what ways are you becoming smarter about comprehension work?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students will reread “It’s That It Hurts.”</li> <li>Students will work with partners to confirm or revise their synopsis of the story that accounts for characters, key moments, and basic plot development.</li> <li>Students will share their understanding of the story by sharing out their answers to the comprehension questions in a whole-class setting.</li> <li>Students will identify and share out the important things learned about each character in the story.</li> <li>Students will reflect on the comprehension work they have been doing by quick-writing and discussing their answers to the following questions: “What are the things you did to answer this question and what was the order—as best you can remember—in which you did them?”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RL.8.2</li> <li>RL.8.4</li> <li>SL.8.1</li> <li>L.8.4</li> <li>L.8.5</li> </ul>
<b>Session 8</b> <b>Introducing</b> <b>Interpretive</b> <b>Assignment #2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What do you do in order to form an interpretation?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students will form and discuss an interpretation of “It’s That It Hurts” in small groups, responding to the question “What is the ‘it’ that hurts?”</li> <li>Students will reference the text to support their interpretations.</li> <li>Students will take notes about their own and their classmates’ interpretations to help them with the interpretive writing to come.</li> <li>Students will reflect upon and share out their ideas about the process of conducting interpretive discussions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RL.8.1</li> <li>RL.8.2</li> <li>RL.8.3</li> <li>SL.8.1</li> <li>SL.8.3</li> </ul>
<b>Session 9</b> <b>Interpretive</b> <b>Assignment #2:</b> <b>Whole-Class</b> <b>Discussion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What do you do in order to form an interpretation?</li> <li>How can you contribute to a whole-class interpretive discussion?</li> <li>How is forming an interpretation different from responding to a comprehension question?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students will quickly compose an initial written response to the question “What is the ‘it’ that hurts?”</li> <li>Students will participate in a whole-class discussion, trying to answer the same question.</li> <li>Students will take notes about the points and ideas raised during the discussion.</li> <li>Students will think about and identify what they learned about the text that they didn’t know before the discussion.</li> <li>Students will reflect upon and share out any new things they learned today about forming interpretations, as well as review the major differences between comprehension and interpretive work.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RL.8.1</li> <li>RL.8.2</li> <li>RL.8.3</li> <li>W.8.1</li> <li>SL.8.1</li> <li>SL.8.3</li> <li>SL.8.4</li> <li>SL.8.6</li> </ul>
<b>Session 10</b> <b>Studying Drafts,</b> <b>Composing Drafts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What does good interpretive writing look like?</li> <li>In what ways are you becoming smarter about writing interpretive papers?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students will study effective interpretive writing.</li> <li>Students will see examples and non-examples of <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A clear interpretive position.</li> <li>Textual evidence that supports the claim.</li> <li>A compelling explanation that says how the evidence supports the claim.</li> </ol> </li> <li>Students will learn about the importance of demonstrating an authoritative interpretive disposition in their writing—in other words, “sounding like you know what you’re talking about.”</li> <li>Students will write their interpretive papers about “It’s That It Hurts.”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RL.8.3</li> <li>W.8.1</li> <li>W.8.4</li> <li>W.8.5</li> <li>W.8.9</li> <li>W.8.10</li> <li>L.8.3</li> </ul>

## OPTIONAL INTERSESSIONS

<b>Intersession A</b> <b>Articulating</b> <b>the Qualities of</b> <b>Interpretive Writing</b> <b>(Optional)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where am I going?</li> <li>• What makes interpretive writing strong?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help students generate criteria for strong interpretive writing.</li> <li>• Show students a strong student exemplar; invite students to add criteria.</li> <li>• Introduce the “Rubric for Interpretive/Argument Writing”; select one part to focus on.</li> <li>• For that part of rubric, students annotate to put rubric language in own terms.</li> <li>• As a class, the group “steps back” and reflects on the qualities of interpretive writing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• W.8.1</li> <li>• W.8.4</li> <li>• L.8.6</li> </ul>
<b>Intersession B</b> <b>Introducing the</b> <b>Style Manual and Its</b> <b>Contents</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the purpose of a style manual?</li> <li>• What kinds of information are included in a style manual?</li> <li>• How does a style manual work?</li> <li>• How do you use a style manual?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students will become familiar with the idea of language conventions and the purpose of a style manual.</li> <li>• Students will work in pairs to review the contents of the style manual, paying attention to how it is organized.</li> <li>• Students will work together with the class and the teacher to create a chart listing the major types of information contained in the style manual.</li> <li>• Students will work in small groups to clarify how each section of the style manual can be used.</li> <li>• Students will use the style manual to correct error examples of a variety of types and to explain the rules supporting the correction.</li> <li>• Students will participate in a whole-group discussion of the class’s discoveries regarding usage and grammar and add to or revise that column of the “Style Manual Contents” chart as necessary.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• L.8.1</li> <li>• L.8.2</li> <li>• L.8.3</li> </ul>
<b>Intersession C</b> <b>Setting Up and</b> <b>Learning to Use the</b> <b>Error Journal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does the error journal process work?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students will set up their error journal.</li> <li>• Students will see examples of what the teacher’s error markings will look like.</li> <li>• Students will review the steps for using an error journal, copy the steps in their notebook, and see a demonstration of the error journal process being used to correct an error on a sample paper.</li> <li>• Students will work in pairs to apply the error journal process to a second error from the sample paper.</li> <li>• Students will work in pairs to correct the errors marked on one of their own papers.</li> <li>• Students will participate in a class discussion of what was difficult about the error journal work.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• L.8.1</li> <li>• L.8.2</li> <li>• L.8.3</li> </ul>
<b>Intersession D</b> <b>Using the Style</b> <b>Manual During the</b> <b>Error Journal Work</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does the style manual fit into the error journal process?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students will work in pairs to apply the error journal process to another error from a sample student paper.</li> <li>• Students will review, once again, the error journal process of finding an error, referencing it in the style manual, restating what the style manual says about the error, and correcting the error.</li> <li>• Students will work in pairs to correct the errors marked on one of their papers.</li> <li>• Students will participate in a class discussion of what was difficult about the error journal work.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• L.8.1</li> <li>• L.8.2</li> <li>• L.8.3</li> </ul>



# Understanding the Features

In addition to the more standard curriculum features such as learning objectives, guiding questions, student agendas, and materials lists for every session, Inquiry By Design curriculum also includes the following pedagogical structures integrated throughout every unit.



**The First Ten Minutes:** Many teachers begin class with a “bell ringer” or a “do now” task that provides a predictable beginning to each class and helps students shift their mindset away from their previous class period and into the right subject area. Inquiry By Design encourages teachers to dedicate the first ten minutes—or longer, depending on the circumstances—to self-selected independent reading. Remember that independent reading is a vital practice for your students that supports their vocabulary, background knowledge, comprehension, and even their grammar and punctuation, among other things.

Occasionally, or on set days of the week, you may wish to use the beginning of class for some of the following activities, which may also *follow* independent reading as time allows:

- Selection, review, or assessment of vocabulary words (see the planning ahead section of the introduction to this unit or the *Building Vocabulary* guide).
- Independent writing or writing fluency practice (see *Developing Fluency in Writing* guide) or syntax work (see *Studying Syntax*).
- Error journal practice or mini-lessons (see *Constructing an Error Journal*).

In this case, teachers may wish to establish predictable patterns of work. For example, Mondays might begin with writing fluency work, Tuesdays through Thursdays with independent reading, and Fridays with practice in the error journal.

Whatever patterns of practice a teacher adopts, we emphasize, once again, the importance of student-selected independent reading: Your students who are *already readers* will always continue to read outside of the classroom, whereas your students who are not yet enthusiastic readers may never otherwise pick up a book.



**Checks for Understanding and Inquiry Reflections:** Checks for understanding are moments that are highlighted to emphasize the teacher’s role in determining whether students have met the objectives or come close enough to them to continue on with the work as written. Often, these checks for understanding are informal—teachers can easily circulate during small-group work to check for a general sense of understanding (or lack thereof) about a text. Sometimes these involve concrete artifacts, like student reflections in their literacy notebooks, or responses to a quick write prompt.

In nearly all cases, checks for understanding are intended to be *formative* in value—that is, they should guide the teacher’s next steps in instruction, rather than serve as an excuse to reward or punish students based on their responses. If student work is on track, continue on as planned; if student work shows cause for concern, consider what brief instruction might be needed. The scaffolds and modifications called out in each session may present a helpful tool in these situations.

Inquiry reflections are moments in instruction where we challenge students to step back and think metacognitively about the work they’ve been doing. This metacognition aids not only in comprehension of the immediate task, it is especially helpful in the transfer of knowledge and skills to future tasks.



**Scorable Moments:** Scorable moments are noted throughout the manual to help direct teachers’ attention to activities or pieces of work that may be appropriate for the gradebook. Inquiry By Design recognizes that many schools and districts establish requirements for how many grades ought to be entered over a set period of time; at the same time, we know that focusing too much on grades can actually impede student learning and students’ willingness to take risks in their thinking and writing. Numerous studies show that grades frequently hamper the effectiveness of teacher feedback on student work—when students receive a paper with both constructive feedback and a grade, they tend overwhelmingly to focus on the grade and ignore the feedback. As summarized by Dylan Wiliam (2018), studies show that

“the effect of giving both scores and comments was the same as the effect of giving scores alone. Far from producing the best effects of both kinds of feedback, giving grades alongside the comments completely washed out the beneficial effects of the comments; students who got high grades didn’t need to read the comments, and students who got low scores didn’t want to.”

Rightly or wrongly, though, grades are a common motivating force in the classroom, and as noted, may simply be required by policy. As indicated throughout the manual, the scorable moments marked in the guide may either be for *formative work* (see recommendations below) or for *summative work*. Often there are tasks that overlap both of these categories—for example, the first argument paper in a series of three argument tasks might be a fair opportunity for scoring what has been taught so far, but might be an even better opportunity for providing feedback and setting goals for the following work. Teachers are encouraged to use their discretion, as always.

Formative and summative work should certainly be treated differently by the teacher, with many experts agreeing that, because formative work reflects students' practice in trying out new skills, it should serve only to provide opportunities for feedback and for modifying instruction—never for grading purposes. But if you must provide scores for formative work, rather than just feedback, notes, or further instruction, there are several options for how to approach this:

- Formative work can be given feedback and a simple ✓ for completion to indicate that the student made a full attempt at the task.
- If graded, Caroline Wylie, director of research at ETS, suggests separating the grades from the feedback—for example, returning the work with feedback for the students on one day and only allowing them to see their grades the next day (Heitin, 2015).
- Grades for formative work can be recorded in a way that does not affect the final grade for students, can be superseded by summative work, or can be treated as “as if” scores—scores that reflect what a student *would* have scored, had it been summative. In all of these cases, the feedback itself is still the most important component (Heitin 2015).

Summative tasks, which consist primarily of full, formal writing samples, can be scored using the rubric of the appropriate genre found in the *Rubrics for Writing* guide, where teachers will also find corresponding student checklists.

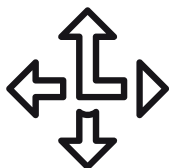


**Scaffolds and Modifications:** Appropriate and timely scaffolds and modifications are called out in each session. Detailed advice for effectively implementing each type of support is provided in the Appendix; however, here are a few general guidelines for scaffolding:

- Don't scaffold preemptively—let students show you what they need before you *presume* what they need.
- Provide as little scaffolding as necessary for as brief a time as possible. Do your students *need* a highly structured small-group discussion protocol with individual roles, or would they get what they need from establishing and reviewing classroom norms? And if they needed that structure last time, are there parts of that structure that can be more flexible this time?
- The goal is always student learning, not task performance. When you select a scaffold, consider whether it is one that simply makes it easier for students to get an A on a task, or one that helps free up thinking space for important cognitive work. In other words, the scaffold should simplify the *unimportant* aspects of the work so students can focus on the *vitally important* aspects.
- Providing helpful, open-ended *questions* is preferable to providing helpful answers.
- Whenever possible, engage students in the development of solutions. They may propose something simpler and more effective than you had in mind, saving you time and effort.



**Special Considerations for English Learners:** Scaffolding for English learners (ELs) merits additional consideration. A full discussion of EL needs and appropriate methods for adapting instruction can be found in *Amplifications for English Language Learners*, located in the *Fluency* guide. However, many of the most common interventions are called out at appropriate moments in each session and then detailed in the Appendix of this unit (see “Scaffolds and Modifications: Descriptions and Use”). These methods are appropriate for *all* learners, in addition to being *especially* helpful for English language learners.



**Intersessions, Planning Ahead for Writing Instruction, and Next Steps for Student Writing:** Instruction, as we often emphasize, is meant to be responsive to student needs. In this and other teacher manuals you will sometimes find recommended *intersessions*, which incorporate additional instructional material that is not, strictly speaking, part of this unit. These sessions are often drawn from our flexible-use resources (such as the material within the *Fluency*, *Form*, and *Correctness* guides), and our intention in providing them here is twofold:

1. First, we include them for ease of use and for teachers who may not be sure which resources to turn to at what time. They can be taught as written, often as a segue into a writing task.
2. Second, we include them as a reminder to all teachers
  - » That students will often need additional practice or instruction throughout the learning process;
  - » That Inquiry By Design has a great deal of additional materials available specifically for moments like this; and
  - » That this particular moment in instruction is probably a good time to reexamine what needs students have demonstrated and to consider how best to meet these needs.

The same considerations inform “Planning Ahead for Writing Instruction” and “Next Steps for Student Writing,” which appear before and after the introduction of a formal student writing task. The task itself is only the vehicle for deliberate writing practice: Teachers have several instructional choices to make throughout the writing process, many of which are, again, supported by additional Inquiry By Design materials.



**Extension Work:** At times, you may find suggestions for additional instruction, readings, or tasks. Use these to extend the learning, to challenge students further, to personalize the work, or to touch on topics that you'd like to give more attention.

# Introduction

*Introduction to Interpretive Work* is designed to provide students with an opportunity to deepen their understanding of the kinds of work people do with texts in English. Specifically, the work in this unit provides students with an opportunity to experience the practices of close reading as well as interpretive work distinguished by clear interpretive statements that are supported by compelling explanations and anchored in specific moments in the text. This type of interpretive work falls under the category of argument, as students learn to stake out a clear position and build a careful case for it.

In this unit, students will work with two texts: Alice Walker’s “Everyday Use” and Tomás Rivera’s “It’s That It Hurts.” Work with each text is marked by a cycle that includes

- An essential round of comprehension work, followed by small- and large-group meetings and discussions dedicated to ensuring that students know the text well
- The introduction of clear interpretive tasks that follow the comprehension work.
- Small-group and large-group discussions that are linked to the interpretive tasks and that support and dovetail with note taking and writing tasks.
- The writing of formal interpretive papers.
- “Step-back” work, woven into the unit after comprehension and interpretive work, designed to help students understand and manage the different demands posed by comprehension and interpretation tasks.

The teacher’s primary role during this work is to support students through different moments in the cycle. Modeling and adept facilitation of class discussions should characterize much of the instruction.

## A NOTE ON DISCUSSIONS

There is a significant body of research on intelligence and the role of socialization in its development. A very concise distillation of this work might be: People don’t get smarter by themselves. To get smarter, people have to interact with other people through writing and discussion. Interpretive work is difficult. For many students, it will seem very unfamiliar, even though they build interpretations, often quite compelling ones, daily. The academic context can seem disorienting, though, and a large

part of this unit's work is devoted to beginning the process of demystifying what interpretive work looks like in this context. If students are not permitted to try out interpretations and to talk back to other students' interpretations, they will remain mystified. In short, then, students talking to other students in productive ways is essential to the development of their interpretive capacities in academic contexts. Classrooms where students are silent, or where students are reduced to remembering and reciting other people's interpretations, are antithetical to this process.

In addition to establishing clear expectations for what counts as effective talk, one way a teacher scaffolds the conversations in the classroom is by moving students from small-group discussions, where students work with one or two other students, into whole-group discussions. Guiding students through focused reflection exercises that encourage them to look at, discuss, and think carefully about how to tackle comprehension and interpretive tasks is another essential role the teacher will take in this work.

## PLANNING AHEAD

*What materials do I need to have or prepare in advance?*

- For Session 10: Make sure you have collected, reviewed, and selected papers or excerpts from the first writing assignment (Session 5) for use with your students.
- For the writing tasks, determine whether you will use the Inquiry By Design rubric and checklist for this genre of writing (see *Rubrics for Writing*).
- Review the intersessions and the "Next Steps for Student Writing" found in this unit. If you plan to implement any of the suggested supporting lessons or revision work, be sure to account for them as you plan your schedule.

*What parts of this unit, if any, can I omit, if necessary, for time constraints?*

- While we recommend following the complete unit when possible, if time does not allow, you may choose to read, discuss, and write about one of the two texts. We do not recommend cutting out comprehension or interpretive work for a text in order to shorten a unit; these tasks build students' skills and prepare them for the writing work that follows.
- You may not wish to do full cycles of writing work for both assignments. Instead of creating final drafts of each, for example, you may wish to have students revise the writing task of their choice for a final grade.

*How can I plan for vocabulary instruction?*

- If your vocabulary work is based on teacher-selected words:  
Skim through the materials for useful Tier 2 words, as well as Tier 1 words that may be unfamiliar to students and Tier 3 words. Plan to address terms appropriate for the genre of reading and writing that students will be completing. Potential vocabulary selections are included as texts are introduced in the sessions that follow. Not every text presents a "full set" of appropriately challenging vocabulary. Remember the usefulness of generative words, though, and feel free to develop (or to develop with students) a list of related words.

- If your vocabulary work is based on student-selected words:

Set aside time for students to skim through the reader searching for unfamiliar words. After a few minutes, have students call out suggestions and write them on the board, working with the students to narrow down an appropriate list of words that are both useful and appropriately challenging. Related words can also be generated from this list. Remember that not all unfamiliar words are necessarily good choices for deep work—sometimes, students only need to get the “gist” of the definition.

Remember that the most important part of vocabulary instruction for students is repeated, meaningful encounters with the words, so whenever you have time after independent reading, between tasks, or after a closing meeting, be sure to add vocabulary reinforcement activities.

See the Inquiry By Design guide *Building Vocabulary* for more information about this work.

## A FINAL NOTE

The sessions in this unit are best viewed as illustrations or sketches. They are offered to help teachers visualize how instruction might unfold in time, not to serve as a rigid set of absolutes. You may find that sessions take slightly more or less time, or that two can be completed in one class period. Revise and customize as necessary. It is important to keep in mind that any course of study is, when properly used, a tool for teaching students. The moment we make instructional decisions that lead us to choose “coverage” over the delivery of appropriate and timely instruction to individual students, we have erred. It is in the spirit of appropriate and timely instruction that the following sessions are provided





## SESSION 1

# Introducing “Everyday Use”: Comprehension Work

### AGENDA

- Students will listen to “Everyday Use” and read along silently, marking the text and making notes in the margin of their student reader.
- Students will work with partners to craft a synopsis of the story that accounts for the narrator, key characters, and basic plot development.

**Teaching Note:** During the first two sessions of this study, the aim is to lead students through some careful comprehension-level work with “Everyday Use.” This comprehension work is a critical first step that prepares for the interpretive work that follows. This session is written so that a teacher reads the story aloud to the class the first time through. Or, as an alternative, students could do this first reading independently. In either case, the comprehension work would culminate in a whole-class discussion dedicated to crafting a synopsis of the story that accounts for essential information about characters and plot development.

A few things to remember about comprehension work in this and in all other Inquiry By Design studies: First, brief is best. Students will spend a significant amount of time reading (and rereading), discussing, and writing about the stories in this unit. A brisk pace during the comprehension phase is an essential part of keeping this work fresh and engaging. Second, as with learning in general, comprehension skills are most effectively developed in highly social settings that feature significant amounts of intense and focused discussion. Opportunities for these kinds of discussions among students shape the work that follows.

#### Learning Objectives

- Students will read and demonstrate a basic understanding of the characters and events in “Everyday Use.”

#### Guiding Questions

- What are some strategies for comprehending a fictional text?

#### Materials

- Copy of “Everyday Use” to read aloud



## THE FIRST TEN MINUTES

- Throughout this and future units, continue to spend at least the first ten minutes of class in independent reading. Remember that independent reading is a vital practice for your students that supports their vocabulary, background knowledge, comprehension, and even their grammar and punctuation, among other things.
- Occasionally, or on set days of the week, you may wish to use the beginning of class for some of the following activities. These may also follow independent reading as time allows:
  - » Review or selection of vocabulary words (see introduction of this unit or *Building Vocabulary* guide).
  - » Independent writing or writing fluency practice (see *Developing Fluency in Writing* guide) or syntax work (see *Studying Syntax*).
  - » Error journal practice or mini-lessons (see *Constructing an Error Journal*).
- In the remaining sessions, the first ten minutes are indicated with an icon only.

## FOCUS LESSON

- Explain to students that during the next several sessions they will do work with two short stories: Alice Walker’s “Everyday Use” and Tomás Rivera’s “It’s That It Hurts.” The work with these stories is designed to help students develop their understanding of what it means to do close and careful interpretive work with texts in English. There are a couple of important objectives to highlight for students:
  - » On one level, we are studying these stories because they are complex, interesting stories that are worth reading and discussing on their own.
  - » On another level, we are studying these stories because they offer opportunities to stretch important skills in our reading, discussing, and writing. Specifically, we’ll be looking at how we read for understanding, how we construct an interpretation of a story, and how we build an *argument* to support our interpretation.
- As preparation for reading “Everyday Use” ask students to turn to the short biography of Alice Walker in their student readers.
- Explain to students that this is the first story they will work with during this unit. Point out that the work of this session will be devoted to a “getting oriented” reading of the story. This kind of work is often referred to as “comprehension” work.
- Write the following three comprehension questions on the board:
  - » Who are the characters in the story?
  - » What are the important things we learn about each of them in the story?
  - » What happens in the story? In other words, what are the big events in the story and in what order do they happen?

### Biographical Sketch

#### Alice Walker

The daughter of sharecroppers, Alice Walker was born in 1944 in a rural farming community in Georgia. Growing up during an era of racial segregation, Walker attended the only high school available to Blacks. Her high marks there earned her not only the honor of valedictorian, but a full scholarship to university as well. She graduated from Sarah Lawrence College in New York in 1965.

Walker’s lifelong commitment to social activism began in college where she devoted much of her energy to equal rights for both African Americans and women. While still in college, she met Martin Luther King, inspiring her to take part in the 1963 March on Washington and to return to the South where she worked to register Blacks to vote. Walker is also credited with coining the phrase “womanist”—a term advocating for women of color specifically.

In 1967, Walker married a Jewish civil rights lawyer, and the couple became the first legally married interracial couple in Mississippi—and the target of the Ku Klux Klan as well.

Though she is the author of numerous, prize-winning poems, short stories, and books, Walker is best known for her 1982 novel *The Color Purple*, which won both the National Book Award and the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction. The book was also made into a critically acclaimed film directed by Steven Spielberg and more recently, a Broadway musical.

“Everyday Use”—the story you will read in this unit—is from Walker’s anthology *In Love and Trouble*. The story is set in rural Georgia during the politically turbulent times of the late 1960s.

- Tell students that during this session you would like to read the story aloud to the class one time. Encourage students to use the questions on the board to guide their listening during the read-aloud.
- Point out that at the end of the reading, students will have time to work on the three questions in small groups.
- Encourage students to make notes in the margins of their student reader and to mark the text during the reading. If you wish to introduce a set of marks for annotation, this would be a good time to do so, though we often find that simple works best (\*, !, ?, etc.)

### WORK PERIOD

- Read “Everyday Use” aloud to the class.
- Students should read along silently during the read aloud and mark places in the text, or make brief notes that relate to the comprehension questions on the board.

#### Scaffolds and Modifications

- **Reading:** Chunking or modeling reading strategies. (See “Modeling Reading Strategies: What, How, and When” in Appendix for more information.)
- **Vocabulary:** Preteaching essential vocabulary is viewed as a specific scaffold for students who need it, rather than a standard practice. The following words may be worth reviewing in advance with students who require such a scaffold; otherwise, they are provided as a selection of possible words to review after the initial reading: *tottering*, *faultfinding*, *ignorant*, *recompose*, *furtive*, *courting*, *oppress*.

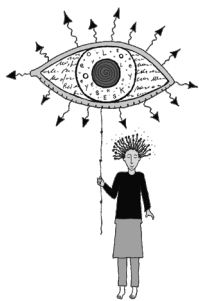




## CLOSING MEETING



- After the reading, give students time to convene in groups of two or three to work on the questions on the board. During this time, they should jot down notes from their conversation on a page in their literacy notebook.
- **Check for understanding:** Monitor students’ work at the end of the period to determine whether or not they understand the story, reviewing literacy notebooks if necessary. Whenever possible, respond to students’ questions by redirecting them to the text with prompts like “See if you can find any moments in the text that might help you answer that” or “Review some of the places that you and others in your group marked in the text to see if that helps.” Remember that students will continue to interact with and reread the text, so they do not need to be experts on it at this moment. Instead, use this time to determine whether or not a whole-class rereading is appropriate in the next session.



## SESSION 2

# “Everyday Use”: Wrapping Up the Comprehension Work

### AGENDA

- Students will reread “Everyday Use.”
- Students will work in small groups to confirm or revise their synopsis of the story that accounts for the narrator, key characters, and basic plot development.
- Students will identify and share moments in the text they consider important.
- Students will reflect on the comprehension work they have been doing by quick-writing and discussing their answers to the following questions: “What are the things you did to answer this question and what was the order—as best you can remember—in which you did them?”

**Teaching Note:** It is often the case that students will benefit from a second reading of a story. They often notice things in a text during a second reading that they don’t catch the first time through. A second reading is especially important if a lot of time has passed since students’ first encounter with the text. If you think your class would benefit from another pass through the story, consider incorporating a second reading of “Everyday Use” into the beginning of this session. There are different ways this can be done effectively, including placing students in groups of twos or threes to reread the story, giving students time to reread it independently, or simply rereading the story aloud to the whole class again. Students can use this second reading to check for gaps in the comprehension work they did in the previous session. That said, a whole-class rereading should not be “automatic”—spending too much time rereading for comprehension can sap the early momentum and pacing of the unit, so choose this only if it is clear students need this experience.

#### Learning Objectives

- Students will demonstrate a basic understanding of the characters and events in “Everyday Use.”
- Students will describe the process for working to comprehend a short story.

#### Guiding Questions

- What are some strategies for comprehending a fictional text?

#### Materials

- Copy of “Everyday Use”
- Chart paper or other display
- New chart titled “Comprehension Strategies”

### The First Ten Minutes

Reserve the first 10 minutes for independent reading (or on occasion, alternate with vocabulary, writing fluency, syntax, or error journal work).



## FOCUS LESSON/WORK PERIOD

- Consider leading students through a second reading of "Everyday Use," depending on the progress of their group work and the frequency of their questions in the last period (see teaching note above). You may choose to consult students for their preference. If students demonstrated a common and especially important misunderstanding last class (one that would not be easily resolved through whole-group discussion), direct this reading toward resolving that misunderstanding by saying something like, "Last class, I heard from a lot of you that you thought \_\_\_\_\_, but I think there might be other explanations. Let's look for other possibilities and mark moments that might help us think through that as we reread today."

### Scaffolds and Modifications

- Reading: Second read-aloud, chunking, retelling.
- Speaking and Listening: Discussion norms, goal-setting.
- See "Scaffolds and Modifications: Descriptions and Use" in the Appendix for more information on these and other options.



- Explain to students that, in a few minutes, the whole class will convene to discuss the comprehension questions introduced in Session 1. In preparation for that whole-group meeting, review with the class the three comprehension questions introduced during Session 1:
  - » Who are the characters in the story?
  - » What are the important things we learn about each of them in the story?

» What happens in the story? In other words, what are the big events in the story and in what order do they happen?

- Next, have students return to the small groups they worked in during the end of Session 1 to review their responses to the comprehension questions.
- Afterwards, take 5-7 minutes to facilitate a whole-class discussion about the three comprehension questions. Use this time to help students articulate their understanding of the characters and the events in "Everyday Use." To verify understanding and to provide an artifact that students can consult in the sessions ahead, consider capturing the class's answers to the comprehension questions on a chart.

## CLOSING MEETING

- The stories and work in this unit are important primarily as an orientation to what it means to do comprehension and interpretive work with texts. Critical components of this work are strategically placed "step-back" moments where students are invited to reflect on the work they have done and how they accomplished it. These reflections help students identify strategies that helped them, which will help them recall these strategies later and aid in skill transfer: Without being specifically directed to reflect on and then return to these strategies, many students will not realize the work they have done. This session's closing meeting is reserved for the first of these "step-back" moments.

- Direct the class's attention to this comprehension question:
  - » What are the important things we learn about each of them (characters) in the story?
- Remind students that one reason we are studying these stories is because they help us think about how we *read for understanding*.
- **Inquiry reflection and check for understanding:** Review the question with the class and then, to help students reflect back on the work they did to answer it, lead the class through the following cycle of step-back work:
  1. Take a moment to reflect back on the work you did with this question. Even if it did not seem difficult to you, think about each separate step you took along the way.
  2. Take 3-4 minutes to write down in your literacy notebook a list that answers the following question:
 

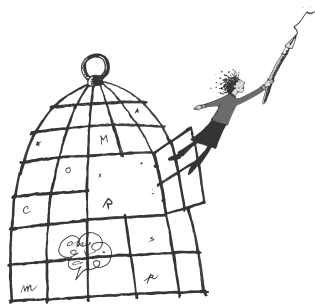
What are the things you did to answer this question and what was the order—as best you can remember—in which you did them? List everything that comes to mind.
  3. Take your notes to a small-group discussion with two other students. For 2-3 minutes, the three of you should work together to share your lists. During this share out time, be sure to ask questions of one another as needed and, most importantly, to revise or add new items to your list. Your goal here should be to leave this short meeting with a list of things you did that is as detailed and accurate as possible.
  4. Finally, participate actively in a 3- to 5-minute long whole-group discussion about the “what are the things you did” question. Imagine that in this discussion you are working as a whole class to create an even more comprehensive list of the things a reader does when answering a comprehension question.
- Capture the list the class generates during the whole-class discussion on a chart titled something like "Comprehension Strategies." (You will need this chart again in Sessions 6 and 7.) Afterwards, post this list in the room so that students can consult it as needed during class or independent reading. Note that some of these strategies, like annotating and rereading, are tools that students can use with any reading they are doing, while others, like discussing with peers, are only possible when everyone is reading the same things. All of these strategies, however, are things that good readers do from time to time.



**Scorable Moment:  
Formative**







## SESSION 3

# Introducing Interpretive Assignment #1

## AGENDA

- Students will form and discuss an interpretation of “Everyday Use” in small groups, responding to the question: At the end of the story, Maggie smiles—“But a real smile, not scared.” Why isn’t Maggie scared anymore?
- Students will reference the text to support their interpretations.
- Students will take notes about their own and their classmates’ interpretations, to help them with the interpretive writing to come.

**Teaching Note:** In this session, the class begins to spend more time in small- and whole-group interpretive discussion, a cycle that will continue throughout the year. Strategies for “Establishing a Strong Culture of Discussion” are included at the end of this session. Be sure to review these in advance of class discussions.

### Learning Objectives

- In small groups, students will generate an initial attempt at a claim in response to the interpretive question and mark supporting moments in the text.

### Guiding Questions

- What do you do in order to form an interpretation?

### Materials

- “Chart paper or other display

## FOCUS LESSON

- On the board or a chart, write the interpretive question from “Interpretive Assignment #1” as well as the definition of a good argument. (You may choose instead to photocopy and distribute the information on the next page.) *Note: Do not share any possible answers to the question at this time. Also, do not share the assignment sheet found in the Appendix since that includes possible answers.*
- Remind students that an interpretation is a type of argument that writers make about literary texts. This might be a helpful time to quickly review certain ideas specific to argument, but this should be done briefly—make sure students have the majority of the class time available for the work period.

### The First Ten Minutes

Reserve the first 10 minutes for independent reading (or on occasion, alternate with vocabulary, writing fluency, syntax, or error journal work).



## Preparation for Interpretive Assignment #1

For this assignment you will write an argument about “Everyday Use” that answers the question in the box below.

At the end of the story, Maggie smiles—“But a real smile, not scared.”  
*Why isn't Maggie scared anymore?*

As you are working, remember that, while there can be lots of different interpretations, a good argument must include the following:

- A claim that answers the question.
- Text evidence that supports your claim.
- Explanations that show how that evidence supports your position.
- A response to other possible arguments or counterclaims.

Before you write your response, you will have an opportunity to discuss the question in a small group and then, later, with the class as a whole. Members of the groups do not have to agree on an interpretation. The purpose of these discussions is to give you a chance to “try out” responses before writing, to hear other readers’ reactions to those responses, and to help each other identify examples or moments to support and/or otherwise refine those responses. Be sure to take good notes during these discussions. These notes will make your interpretive writing better and easier.

Be sure to bring your notes and a copy of “Everyday Use” to these discussions, as you will need these to find important passages in the story.

- » Provide a simple definition of terms like claim, evidence, and explanation (sometimes called warrant or analysis), or prompt students for these definitions.
- » Poll students for their ideas about what counts as evidence in making an interpretation of a story. How might a person support their claim? Jot student suggestions on the board, and point out to students that they’ll be reviewing the evidence today to start forming a claim.

## WORK PERIOD

- Place students in groups of twos or threes.
- Remind the class that the purpose of the small-group work is to give students a chance to discover, experiment with, and refine the interpretations they will write later. Remind students to take notes during these discussions, as these will be useful to them when they set out to write their interpretive papers.
- Give the groups time to conduct their discussions. During this time, remind them that they might review the task, the story, and their notes in order to generate and test out ideas. (Be sure to review "Establishing a Strong Culture of Discussion" in advance of this session.)
- **Check for understanding:**
  - » Confer with groups about the work during this time. Be sure to remind and model for the groups how to use (reference, read from, point to) the text during these exchanges. Also, take time to show students how to jot notes and ideas down during these discussions.
  - » Observe the early interpretive moves students are making: Are they especially literal or speculative? Are they based mostly on one or two pieces of support, or do they take the whole story into account? You do not need to address these needs now, but may wish to provide instruction on them during the next cycle of work.
  - » Provided students are able to generate at least some ideas for claims and some relevant evidence to support them, they should be ready to continue to the next session's work.

### Scaffolds and Modifications

- **Speaking and Listening:** Discussion norms, goal-setting, sentence stems.
- **Reading:** Chunking during interpretive work.
- **Tip:** Consider breaking up an especially long work period by checking in with the whole class in the middle. You might use questions like, "What is one thing you've found so far?" or "What is something you or your group are having trouble with right now?"



### Scorable Moment: Formative



## CLOSING MEETING

- Convene the whole class and ask the question, "What did you learn today about why Maggie isn't scared anymore?" You are not seeking a full, developed discussion at this point—only a quick charting of initial ideas.
- Capture student ideas on a chart, so these ideas can be accessed later. Encourage students to write their classmates' ideas in their writers' notebooks, to help them with their upcoming writing assignment.
- During this debrief, pause to work with the students to locate and note the page and line numbers of passages they might want to cite.



# Establishing a Strong Culture of Discussion

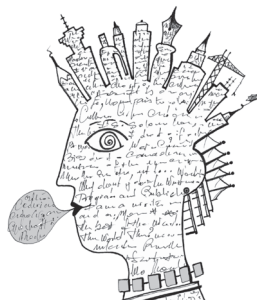
In both small- and whole-group discussions, our goal is to enable students to reason their way critically and constructively toward a common goal, asking and answering questions of one another and working in an environment of mutual respect. What often appear at first to be behavioral problems during discussion are often related to a lack of experience or instruction.

Thus, teachers must carefully observe their students' speaking and listening skills, especially early in the year. As student needs become clear, teachers should provide explicit instruction in the relevant skills and habits and remind and encourage students to focus on improving particular skills during upcoming discussions. Student reflection and teacher feedback should constitute a regular part of this work. Below is an example of a basic framework, which can be customized and built on.

1. Early in the year, establish clear norms for small- and whole-group discussion. What should it look and sound like? What should each student be doing? Involve the whole class in naming these things and revisit them with students each time you move into small- or whole-group discussion, particularly early on. As the year progresses, revisit this list to see if the items still fit. Do any need to be added or removed?
2. After discussion, ask students to reflect on both their own personal participation and that of the class in general. How did it go? What went well? What would they like to see improve? Consider making this a quick write followed by a brief share out.
3. As you identify patterns in the class's work, share your feedback with them and use it to set goals: "I've noticed that we're getting much better at sharing out our ideas in discussion, and now I'd like to see everyone engaging more with what other students have shared. Ask each other questions, or politely push back on ideas you disagree with. What kinds of words or phrases might we use to build on each other's ideas? Let's make a quick list so we can look back at it if we need to."
4. Prior to extended class discussions, consider asking students to review any earlier reflections and to set goals based on the classroom norms you've established. Ask them to write down their goals—for example, "I need to work on pausing before I speak, so I can let other people finish their ideas and make sure other students have the chance to share"—and to reflect on them afterward.

A number of scaffolds and modifications focused on speaking and listening can be found in the Appendix. For a list of discussion protocols, which usually involve assigning specific roles to students or arranging students into groups of participants and observers, you may wish to review a site like <https://www.cultofpedagogy.com/speaking-listening-techniques/>; others can be found at the click of a search button. Additional tools, forms, and reflection tasks can be found in *Creating a Student Portfolio*.

Regardless, we wish to reiterate our hope that all teachers observe their students' strengths and needs in classroom discussions; that they explicitly teach necessary behaviors, skills, and talk moves; and that students have opportunities to set and reflect on goals and to receive feedback on their performance.



## SESSION 4

# Interpretive Assignment #1: Whole-Class Discussion

### AGENDA

- Students will quickly compose an initial written response to the question: At the end of the story, Maggie smiles—“But a real smile, not scared.” Why isn’t Maggie scared anymore?
- Students will participate in a whole-class discussion, trying to answer the same question.
- Students will take notes about the points and ideas raised during the discussion.
- Students will think about and identify what they learned about the text that they didn’t know before the discussion.
- Students will reflect upon and share out their ideas regarding the process of forming interpretations.

**Teaching Note:** In the previous session, you introduced students to Interpretive Assignment #1. In the field of English, one of the most common forms of argument is literary interpretation, and this task specifically asks students to write an argument in response to the prompt. In order for a persuasive essay to rise to the level of “argument,” it must address possible counterclaims or alternate positions.

The whole-class discussion in this session is an excellent time to reinforce the importance of competing claims.

- During the discussion, several possible claims will be made in response to the question—some may be very similar, while others may be quite different.
- When you begin to write your response to the assignment, you will need to choose a claim to support—but you will also need to show how your claim is different from at least one other possible point of view. We call these other points of view “counterclaims” or “alternative positions” or “opposing claims.”

#### **Learning Objectives**

- Students will share and support their responses to the interpretive question, clarifying, specifying, and modifying as needed.

#### **Guiding Questions**

- What do you do in order to form an interpretation?
- How can you contribute to a whole-class interpretive discussion?
- How is forming an interpretation different from responding to a comprehension question?

#### **Materials**

- “Criteria for a Good Discussion” sheet

- As you add to your notes at the end of the class discussion, be sure that you mark down not only information about your own point of view, but also at least one other perspective that was raised. This will be useful during your writing.

### The First Ten Minutes

Reserve the first 10 minutes for independent reading (or on occasion, alternate with vocabulary, writing fluency, syntax, or error journal work).



## FOCUS LESSON

- Write the interpretive question on the board and revisit it with the class.

At the end of the story, Maggie smiles—“But a real smile, not scared.”

*Why isn't Maggie scared anymore?*

- Ask students to spend 10 minutes composing a written response to this question in their literacy notebook. Explain to students that this initial writing exercise is aimed to help them in today's whole-class discussion about this question. Explain to students that good responses will make a claim (a one-sentence answer to the question “Why isn't Maggie scared anymore?”) and an explanation to back up the claim that is supported by textual evidence.
  - » You may wish to inform students that they will add to these responses at the end of class, and that while you plan to read through these to see their ideas and their thinking, they do not need to worry about writing it perfectly at this time. This is writing-to-think work.
  - » Walk around during this time to get a sense of students' understanding of the text and task.
- After students have written for 10 minutes, take a few minutes to share the “Criteria for a Good Discussion” provided nearby. (A copy-ready version can be found in the Appendix.) Explain to students that this session's work period will be dedicated to a whole-class discussion of the question.
- Explain to students that you, as the teacher, will NOT be participating in the discussion. Instead, you will be charting the ideas and references that students focus on in their conversation. Help students to understand that they should be having an “adult-like” discussion, where they don't necessarily have to raise their hands, but rather can wait for the right moment to jump into the discussion to make a point.

If students have a hard time with this, you may consider introducing some of the “Sentence Stems” shown nearby. But try conducting a discussion at least once before introducing the stems. Many groups of students won't need them.

### Sentence Stems

- I agree with \_\_\_\_\_ because...
- I disagree with \_\_\_\_\_ because...
- I don't understand...
- Can you please explain...
- Can you tell me more about...
- What if...
- What you said makes me think/wonder...

## Criteria For a Good Discussion

*What are students saying and doing during discussion?*

### Students are...

- Mindful of group/classroom norms.
- Contributing ideas to the group discussion.
- Supporting ideas with specific moments in the text.
- Referring to specific page numbers, line numbers, or quotations in the text to support their arguments.
- Using sentence stems.
- Listening to each other's ideas and building on them.
- Questioning each other's ideas.
- Pausing after someone is finished speaking.

### Students are not...

- Disregarding group/classroom norms.
- Sitting silently and disengaging from the discussion.
- Drifting to off-topic conversations.
- Making generalizations that are not supported in the text.
- Dominating the conversation.
- Being rude, or using disrespectful language.
- Displaying anger when somebody doesn't agree with them.
- Interrupting someone who is talking.

## WORK PERIOD

- Ask students to take a moment to gather their notebooks and their student readers.
- Tell students that they will have 20 minutes to complete their class discussion. *(Twenty minutes seems to be the right amount of time to allow a class of 30 students a chance to talk. Sometimes, when you are first beginning whole class discussions, you might begin with less time—10 minutes, for example. After a while though, classes are often able to sustain them for 30–40 minutes.)*
- To begin the discussion, revisit the interpretive question with the class. Then, invite the students to begin the discussion. Using the board, a typed document on display, or chart paper, quietly chart students' ideas (and corresponding text references) as they share. Many ideas will be similar, so not every idea needs to be recorded, but try to capture the gist of the different ideas without adding your own thoughts. If students have not referenced the text, you might ask

### Scaffolds and Modifications

- Speaking and Listening: Goal-setting, turn-and-talk, posing questions, course correction.



something like, “What in the text makes you think that?” Otherwise, try as much as possible to remain quiet and release the conversation to the students.

- Work hard to get comfortable with periods of silence. Make it the job of the students to fill the silent gap, not the job of the teacher. You may jump into the conversation to do any of the following, but do NOT attempt to answer the question yourself, or to steer students toward looking at a particular piece of the text, or considering a certain answer. Also, resist the temptation to praise students’ ideas. Instead, do one of the following:
  - » Let students know when they have 5 minutes left.
  - » Encourage students who have not spoken up, when there are only a few minutes left, to take this opportunity to speak.
  - » Direct students’ attention to specific items on the “Criteria for a Good Discussion” chart.

## CLOSING MEETING

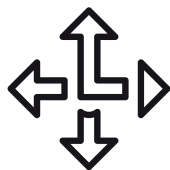


- **Check for understanding:** Ask students to take 3-5 minutes to make any additional notes or changes to the responses they wrote at the beginning of class. Their initial notes, coupled with their notes after the discussion, should help you understand their thinking about the text and how their thinking may have grown or changed. Students should consider some of the following:
  - » Add notes, references, or ideas from the discussion that you had not considered in your earlier writing. These might add to or expand your initial ideas, or they might be new or different ideas entirely—it is perfectly acceptable to have changed your mind during the discussion.
  - » Include notes on at least one other perspective from the discussion that you could use as a counterclaim when you write about this text.
- **Inquiry reflection:** Then, ask students to answer briefly in writing the following “step-back” questions about doing interpretive work independently in class or for homework:
  1. What did you learn about the text that you didn’t know before the discussion? (To answer this question, look back at your notes to see what you added or how your thinking changed.)
  2. What do you do when you form an interpretation?
  3. How is forming an interpretation different from responding to a comprehension question?
  4. What did you learn about forming interpretations from our discussion?
- Students will have time to share their thinking about these questions at the beginning of the next session.

**Scorable Moment:  
Formative**



*In the following session, students will begin drafting a response to the interpretive question from the discussion. It is especially helpful at this time to make sure students have a clear understanding of the expectations of this form of writing. We recommend teachers spend a session allowing students to interact with the rubric and a sample of student writing in this genre—though, importantly, not a piece of writing about this same story/task.*



*For this purpose, we have integrated Session 2-A from Writing Text-Based Arguments, though depending on the class's experience, the teacher may find another session or method to be appropriate at this time.*

## INTERSESSION A (Optional)

# Articulating the Qualities of Interpretive Writing

### AGENDA

- Help students generate criteria for strong interpretive writing.
- Show students a strong student exemplar; invite students to add criteria.
- Introduce the “Rubric for Interpretive/Argument Writing”; select one part to focus on.
- For that part of rubric, students annotate to put rubric language in own terms.
- As a class, the group “steps back” and reflects on the qualities of interpretive writing.

**Teaching Note:** Coming into this session, students already will have had many experiences doing interpretive work during discussions and will know some of the thinking that is required in order to

support a claim, etc. The purpose of Session 2-A is to help students to become more aware of what interpretation involves and to specifically articulate the qualities of strong interpretive writing. In that sense, this session serves as a bridge between the “talking” and the “writing” parts of thinking.

Students will use *multiple sources* as they work to articulate the qualities of interpretive writing: their own background knowledge, their reading of exemplars, *and* the “Rubric for Interpretive/Argument Writing.” (Grade-level versions of all rubrics can be found in the *Rubrics for Writing* guide.) Note that the purpose of this session is *much bigger* than just “introducing” the rubric. This session is based on work by formative assessment expert Jan Chappuis (2009), who states:

- Students improve when teachers provide “a clear and understandable vision of the learning target [or goal].”
- Students improve when teachers “use examples and models of strong and weak work.”

#### Common Core State Standards

- W.8.1
- W.8.4
- L.8.6

#### Learning Objectives

- To introduce after students have done interpretive work in discussions and are now transitioning to communicating interpretations in formal writing.

#### Guiding Questions

- Where am I going?
- What makes interpretive writing strong?

Used at its best, understanding the language of a rubric can help answer what Chappuis considers the first big question that drives effective formative assessment: “*Where am I going?*” (Rubrics do *not* give students specific strategies on how to improve their writing). Once teachers have introduced the rubric, you can adapt this session to review rubric components.

See our previous cautions about the misuse of rubrics. Used at its worst, rubrics can be incomprehensible to students, lead to formulaic writing, and seduce teachers so that they lose sight of the unique writing, and *writers*, with whom they work.

This session involves a concept attainment activity<sup>1</sup>, in which students articulate the qualities of and/or criteria for strong interpretive writing *in their own words, before* you show them the “Rubric for Interpretive/Argument Writing.”

- Use five pieces of chart paper, simply labeled 1-5. Each chart is for one descriptive part of the interpretive/argument rubric; the fifth chart is for “other.” Do NOT put the rubric headings on the chart in advance. The point is for students to construct their own criteria and infer the headings based on how you categorize their comments.
- To do this activity, teachers must know the rubric well. You listen as students offer their criteria, determine which chart the comment fits with, and then write that comment—in the students’ own words—on the appropriate chart. Place any comment that does not seem to fit on Chart 5, which you will later label “other.”
- Once students have generated enough criteria so there are at least some comments on each of the five charts, students infer the labels or headings for each part of the rubric.

## FOCUS LESSON

- Tell the class that the purpose of today’s session is to understand the criteria for effective interpretive writing. What makes interpretive writing strong?
- Remind students that they already know a lot about interpretive thinking: They demonstrate it consistently in their rich discussions of text(s).
- Tell them that today, you will focus on helping them build a common understanding of and language to describe strong interpretive writing.
- See the teaching note above for a detailed description of this “concept attainment” activity. Ask students to generate criteria for strong interpretive writing. What do we already know about what makes interpretive writing strong? As students share comments, write them on the charts numbered 1-5. (For example, if a student says “strong interpretive writing includes good evidence,” you would write that on Chart 3 (to go with “Development”).
- Display student exemplar essay (A) in front of the class. Read it aloud. When you are done reading, think aloud about qualities of this writing that you noticed. What did you see in the writing that fits the criteria students generated on the five charts? Is there anything you see in the writing that leads you to want to add something to the class’s list of criteria?
- Invite students to add their thinking. What did they see that fit their criteria? What do they want to add to their list of criteria?

- Now, label the five charts from the criteria students generated during the focus lesson: Four charts with the descriptive headings from the interpretive/ argument rubric (Comprehensive Understanding of Issues, Organization, Development, Language, and Syntax) and the fifth with the heading “Other features of strong interpretive writing.”
- Remind students that the purpose of this session is to understand and articulate the qualities of interpretive writing. Point out to them that they generated many of the same criteria experts have identified for what makes interpretive writing strong.
- Distribute copies of the “Rubric for Interpretive/Argument Writing.” (A copy-ready version can be found in the *Rubrics for Writing* guide.) Give students a few moments in pairs to skim the entire document, simply to get oriented.
- Call students’ attention to the part you are choosing to focus on for today’s session. (For any session in which you use the interpretive/argument rubric, focus on no more than one part or page. Often, you may want to focus on a single bullet. You can adapt Session 2-A to use again for other bullets or rubric parts.)

## WORK PERIOD

- Give students a few minutes to read and annotate this part of the rubric on their own. Specifically ask them to compare the rubric you distributed to the criteria they came up with as a class.
  - » In one color, highlight expectations that are the same on their list and the rubric.
  - » In a second color, highlight expectations that are different.
- Invite students to discuss their annotations of this part of the rubric. What did they notice? Push their thinking by asking questions like “How does this compare with the criteria we came up with?” “What does this bullet point or criterion on the rubric mean?” “Was there anything we thought of that you don’t see listed on the rubric?” “What would that look or sound like in an actual piece of writing?”

## CLOSING MEETING

- Remind students that the purpose of today’s session was to articulate the qualities of strong interpretive writing. They did this by thinking about what they already knew, looking at an exemplar, and studying the interpretive/ argument rubric.
- Ask students to step back and discuss: What writing expectations are you familiar with? What expectations are you confused about at this time?







## SESSION 5

# Interpretive Assignment #1: Drafting Interpretations

### AGENDA

- Students will discuss in small groups “How is forming an interpretation different from responding to a comprehension question?”
- Students will learn that a good written interpretation has three parts:
  - » A clear interpretive claim.
  - » Textual evidence that supports the claim.
  - » An explanation that says how the evidence supports the claim.
  - » A response to other possible arguments or counterclaims.
- Students will write interpretive papers.
- Students will reflect upon the progress they make with the interpretive papers.

**Teaching Note:** Session 5 introduces a formal writing task for “Interpretive Assignment #1.” Inquiry By Design embraces a coaching model of instruction that seeks to help teachers address the specific needs students are demonstrating in their writing; thus, rather than specifying the exact skills to be taught and practiced in each assignment, Inquiry By Design aims to provide guidance and resources for teachers to make the most effective and timely instructional choices for their students.

Any formal writing task can be expected to unfold in three phases. First, based on the class’s needs, a teacher might model a specific skill or use student writing samples to guide students in a particular focus. (Consult the flexible-use resource *Writing Text-Based Arguments* for more detailed guidance on using modeling and exemplars for writing instruction.) Following this work,

### Learning Objectives

- Students will share and support their responses to the interpretive question, clarifying, specifying, and modifying as needed.

### Guiding Questions

- What do you do in order to form an interpretation?
- How can you contribute to a whole-class interpretive discussion?
- How is forming an interpretation different from responding to a comprehension question?

### Materials

- Chart paper or other display
- New chart titled “Comprehension vs. Interpretation”
- Copies of “Interpretive Assignment #1: Writing About ‘Everyday Use’”
- Copies of “Checklist for Interpretive/Argument Writing” (optional)
- Copies of “Rubric for Interpretive/Argument Writing” (optional)

students would begin drafting and completing the writing task with supervision and coaching from the instructor. Lastly, prior to submission, students might engage in a session of peer review or other activity designed to help them revise and improve their draft.

Overwhelming research indicates that feedback is critical to student growth—and that students benefit from this feedback only when they have the opportunity to return to their work and make changes. Comments on a completed work that the student has no opportunity to revise are ineffective. For these reasons, plan to have students write at least a portion of the work in class so you are able to help coach them in real time. In addition, try to include at least one mechanism for feedback and revision with each formal writing assignment. There is also ample research to support the benefit of having students read one another’s work. Well-guided peer feedback can be just as effective and can save significant time for the teacher. As always, we advise teachers to keep the pace brisk. Rather than engaging in multiple rewrites of the same paper until it reaches a state of “perfection,” we typically advise teachers to direct student focus to revising only the highest-priority needs, reserving further instruction for future writing tasks.

## FOCUS LESSON

### The First Ten Minutes

Reserve the first 10 minutes for independent reading (or on occasion, alternate with vocabulary, writing fluency, syntax, or error journal work).



- Place students in groups of threes and give the groups time to discuss the following “step-back” question that was introduced during the closing meeting of the previous session:
  - » How is forming an interpretation different from responding to a comprehension question?
- Ask students to work in their small groups to create a list of four or five ways that interpretive work was different for them than comprehension work.
- Next, reconvene the whole class to discuss the question. Use chart paper or another display to capture the class’s thinking about this. You might organize the responses by creating a simple T-chart, dedicating one column to features of comprehension work and the other to interpretive work. Title the chart something like “Comprehension vs. Interpretation.” Afterwards, be sure to post this list in the room so that students can consult it as needed. (*This is a “working chart,” which means the class will have opportunities to revise and add to it in the sessions ahead. You will use this chart again in Session 8 and 9.*)
- Use this discussion to segue to the next task: composing an interpretive paper.
- Distribute copies of “Interpretive Assignment #1: Writing About ‘Everyday Use’” and discuss expectations with students. (See Appendix for copy-ready version.)
  - » If you are using the “Checklist for Interpretive/Argument Writing” and/or the “Rubric Interpretive/Argument Writing” be sure to orient students to these tools and any area you may be focusing on in particular. (See Appendix for copy-ready versions.) Be sure to read the “Wise Use of Inquiry By

Design Rubrics for Writing” (also in Appendix) if you decide to use these tools. For more in-depth guidance on incorporating the interpretive/argument rubric as part of classroom work, consult *Writing Text-Based Arguments*. If this is the first argument writing you are assigning, it may be best to keep expectations simple—for example, you might focus only on one aspect of the rubric.

- » Note that the task sheet provides a few possible interpretations of the story. These are provided in this foundational unit as a scaffold to the writing task, particularly the requirement that students “make reference to alternative positions.” There is no requirement that students use these claims—in fact, interpretations generated from class discussion may be more compelling—but any of these would be appropriate to argue, or to use as a counterclaim.
- Review with the class the criteria for a good interpretation:
  - » A claim that answers the question.
  - » Text evidence that supports your claim.
  - » Explanations that show how that evidence supports your position.
  - » A response to other possible arguments or counterclaims.
- Remind the class that a good response makes an interpretive statement (a claim) and then supports it with an explanation that is anchored in the text.
- Remind students that this is their first attempt at interpretive writing in this study. Their goal should be to do the best job they can. The interpretive pieces that grow out of this first assignment will be studied later on to help students acquire a better sense of what a really good interpretive response looks like.

## WORK PERIOD

- Give students this time to write their interpretive papers. This is independent work. Remind students that during this work they should feel free to refer to their annotated and marked up copy of “Everyday Use,” any notes or writing they did (such as the quick write from Session 4), the assignment sheet, checklist, and any charts the class generated in this or the previous sessions.
- **Check for understanding:** Use this time to confer with students about this work. Consider whether common student questions, difficulties, or errors merit a focus in either the next session or during the next writing task. If you set a particular focus in your writing expectations, observe students’ performance in this area.

### Scaffolds and Modifications

- **Tip:** Depending on students’ level of comfort and familiarity with this genre of writing, and depending on your instructional goals, you may choose to have students draft this first paper cooperatively with a partner.



## ARGUMENT

### Interpretive Assignment #1 Writing About "Everyday Use"

For this assignment you will write an argument about "Everyday Use" that answers the question in the box below. It will sound familiar to you because you participated in a discussion about it in the previous session's work:

At the end of the story, Maggie smiles—"But a real smile, not scared."

*Why isn't Maggie scared anymore?*

There are many possible correct answers to this question. Here are a few:

- Because for the first time, her mother stood up to Dee on her behalf.
- Maggie realizes that her life is not inferior to her sister's.
- She's no longer afraid of her sister because she understands that she (Maggie) has inherited her family's legacy.

Your job is to think through the possible answers—both the answers listed above as well those that you generate on your own or with the class—and choose the one you think is best. Then write a compelling, 1- to 2-page argument that supports your answer.

Use your "Checklist for Interpretive/Argument Writing" to help you remember everything you must include in your writing, and be sure to draw on all of your discussion notes and class charts as you write. These are valuable resources that will help you complete the assignment.

When you finish writing, make sure your argument includes

1. A claim that answers the question;
2. Support for the claim with evidence from the text;
3. An explanation that shows how that evidence supports your position; and
4. Commentary on potential counterclaims or alternate positions.

### Citing Evidence

When you refer to a specific line or moment from our unit texts, make sure you quote it accurately and tell what page the quotation or moment is from. Here's an example of a sentence in which a line from the text is quoted:

Near the end of the story, Walker describes a dramatic scene where Mama "did something I never had done before: hugged Maggie to me, then dragged her on into the room, snatched the quilts out of Miss Wangero's hands and dumped them into Maggie's lap" (18).

Please notice three things about this example:

1. The author of the quote is clearly identified so the reader knows which text it came from.
2. There are double quotation marks around the part that Walker wrote, and this quotation is copied exactly as Walker wrote it.
3. The page the quotation comes from is placed in parentheses *after* the last double quotation mark but *before* the period. If the author is not identified in the sentence, place the author's last name inside the parentheses, before the page number and without a comma between them, like this: (Walker 18).

## CLOSING MEETING

- Pose the following questions to the class: “What success did you have today when writing your paper? Were you able to form a claim? Were you able to locate textual evidence to support your claim? Were you able to craft a satisfying explanation?” Call on students to share their successes aloud. Determine whether or not students will need an extra day or two to complete their papers.
- Once finished, ask students to turn in their papers. Tell students that you will review and respond to their drafts and, with permission, type up and photocopy excerpts from student papers to review with the class later in the work. Remind the class that the main purpose of this unit is to introduce students to interpretive reading, thinking, and writing. *(When selecting student work to discuss with the class, work to find text that you can use to help the class get smarter about interpretive work. For example, you might cull out solid interpretive statements that have thin explanations, and then ask the class to help you build a more compelling, text-anchored explanation. You will need these excerpts for use in Session 10.)*

### Scorable Moment: Formative/Summative

As the first of two arguments in the unit, this can be treated formatively or scored with a summative rubric.



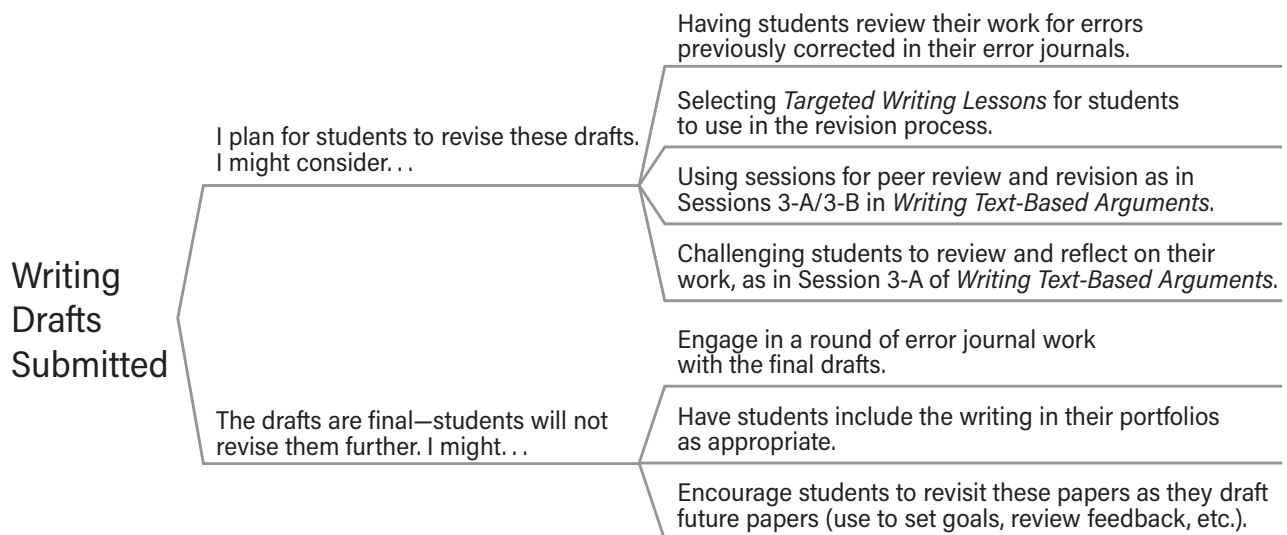
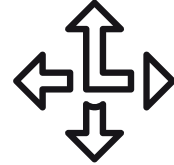
**Teaching Note:** Giving good feedback is both important and, at times, difficult. Not all feedback is effective, and some is even counterproductive. We encourage teachers to keep in mind some of the following recommendations:

- Jan Chappuis (2009) writes that good feedback “limits corrective information to the amount of advice the student can act on,” which may vary between students. Too much feedback can be overwhelming and difficult to process, in addition to being quite time-consuming to produce.
- Give feedback while students have a chance to act on it. Feedback returned along with a final grade is often ignored.
- If you are pointing out a strength, describe specifically what the student has done well (“This introduction gives me a clear understanding of your focus.”).
- For intervention feedback, be clear about the need. Comments can be focused on describing what is present, on posing a question, or on making a clear recommendation—as long as you don’t solve the problem for the student. Consider the following:
  - » “These sentences all begin with the same phrase.”
  - » “Can you think of some different ways of beginning these sentences?”
  - » “Try rearranging or combining some of these sentences to add variety.”

Instead of simply saying “repetitive” or offering new sentence starters for the student, each of these comments gives the student a clear, manageable thought problem to solve.

# Next Steps for Student Writing

Student writing presents the teacher with many choices for how to respond. If the writing is intended to produce a polished draft, it is usually appropriate to allow students opportunities for review, reflection, and feedback before scoring the final product. Research indicates that as soon as a grade or score appears on a piece of writing, students focus on the grade rather than on the feedback, and that feedback is most effective when students have an opportunity to modify or change their work as a result (William 2018). As students submit their drafts, consider which instructional path best fits your needs.



*Before continuing into the second text cycle of this unit, you may wish to take some time to introduce the tools at the heart of students' work with grammar, punctuation, and mechanics: the style manual and error journal. To this end, we have incorporated three intersessions from Constructing an Error Journal that may be helpful if students are not yet familiar with this work. Intersession B prepares students to begin working with the error journal in Intersessions C and D, which in turn set students up to continue the practice throughout the year.*

*To introduce this work, explain to students that they will spend a couple of sessions learning to review, edit, and correct their work using a style manual or guide. They will continue this practice regularly, and as it becomes more familiar, it will take less time and result in stronger writing. In the future, they will probably not spend multiple sessions on the practice, but only part of a class period when appropriate.*

## The Error Journal: A Quick-Start Guide

Take comfort that while this is challenging work, students are not expected to be experts from the very beginning. *Constructing an Error Journal* is scaffolded in a few deliberate stages. We recommend reading through the full introduction to *Constructing an Error Journal* as you prepare students to enter the work; what follows here is a brief orientation.

**First**, students are given time to explore the style manual of choice in "Introducing the Style Manual and Its Contents" (Intersession B). Students are directed to a particular section of the guide, asked to leaf through (or click around) and explore it, and then asked to report back what they discover about how the information is organized, what type of information they find in that section, and what else they notice. They then "try out" a sample correction using that portion of the style guide.

For those using an online manual, the Purdue OWL site is one of the most comprehensive and clearly organized websites, and students build their familiarity with it over time. If you are concerned that it might appear overwhelming, other websites listed below may be more appropriate: both "Guide to Grammar and Writing" and "GrammarBook" can direct students to the appropriate "rule" and corresponding examples within a click or two, once students are familiar with the way the information is organized. "Grammar Bytes" has a particularly good tone for middle schoolers but is less comprehensive.

The Purdue OWL - [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue\\_owl.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue_owl.html)

Guide to Grammar and Writing - <http://guidetogrammar.org>

GrammarBook.com (be sure to note the rules also found under "Effective Writing") - [https://www.grammarbook.com/english\\_rules.asp](https://www.grammarbook.com/english_rules.asp)

Grammar Monster - <https://grammar-monster.com/>

Grammar Bytes - [www.chompchomp.com/rules.htm](http://www.chompchomp.com/rules.htm)



Initially, students will encounter a number of terms and ideas that may be new to them (independent clauses and subordinate/dependent clauses, for example). These can be introduced as mini-lessons going into error journal work, as appropriate.

**Next**, after students have become familiar with the style manual, they set up their own error journal in a notebook or digital document (Intersession C) and practice the routine—copying the sentence with an error, locating and explaining the appropriate correction, then writing the revised sentence below and correcting their paper, if necessary. This takes time at first, and as students are learning the routine, we recommend they work with a partner.

**Early on**—and for as long in the year as necessary—teachers are encouraged to mark student work for correction by locating *only 1-2 major errors*, and only by identifying the *type of error and the sentence it is in* (as opposed to writing in the correction yourself). Teachers are not limited to marking formal essays: Independent writing, exit tickets, quick writes, and fluency work will all serve. The idea is not to turn all of these things into perfect writing; rather, all of these artifacts are insights into the patterns and errors that show up in a student’s work and are suitable for the low-pressure work of the error journal.

**From there**, the important thing is to set aside time to do error journal work with some regularity: “Okay, take out the work I just handed back to you and your error journals. We’re going to work through another round today.” All of the error journal work gets smoother over time, but only if students get frequent opportunities to practice it. As students continue the practice from one year to the next, they are able to build on their skills and need hardly any reintroduction to it.

**Scaffolding:** *Constructing an Error Journal* includes templates for getting students working together, in groups and as a class, to solve writing problems. See specifically, “Tackling the Most Confusing Errors,” “Solving the Three Most Common Errors” (a particularly good one for this purpose), and even “Collaborating for Correctness.”

*The days following the first formal writing assignment often provide a natural opportunity to introduce the error journal work, which is our primary method of working with students' grammar, punctuation, and mechanics. For this purpose we have integrated Sessions 1-A, 1-B, and 1-C, as well as the "Guidelines for Marking Student Papers" from Constructing an Error Journal. Teachers are encouraged to review the entire contents of the manual for a deeper understanding of how error journal work can be incorporated as a regular, ongoing part of classroom work. While the error journal is referenced after each writing task, sessions are not integrated into manuals after this unit.*

## INTERSESSION B (OPTIONAL)

# Introducing the Style Manual and Its Contents

### AGENDA

- Students will become familiar with the idea of language conventions and the purpose of a style manual.
- Students will work in pairs to review the contents of the style manual, paying attention to how it is organized.
- Students will work together with the class and the teacher to create a chart listing the major types of information contained in the style manual.
- Students will work in small groups to clarify how each section of the style manual can be used.
- Students will use the style manual to correct error examples of a variety of types and to explain the rules supporting the correction.
- Students will participate in a whole-group discussion of the class's discoveries regarding usage and grammar and add to or revise that column of the "Style Manual Contents" chart as necessary.

**Teaching Note:** The style manual sessions presume the use of a guide that is divided into discrete sections of grammar, punctuation, and research citation. Many printed guides follow this format (although the terms used to describe them may vary), and some online style resources—such as the Purdue OWL—do as well. However, many online guides geared toward a younger or more general audience do not. Teachers who choose to use a different style manual will necessarily have to adjust the instruction to match the particular text or resource they have selected.

The work of this session loops students through multiple encounters with each section of the style guide. Teachers may choose to dedicate a whole class to this session, or to break it out into several small sessions integrated over a few days of regular instruction. Each section is labeled separately.

### Common Core State Standards

- L.8.1; L.8.2; L.8.3

### Learning Objectives

- To introduce after students have done interpretive work in discussions and are now transitioning to communicating interpretations in formal writing.

### Guiding Questions

- What is the purpose of a style manual?
- What kinds of information are included in a style manual?
- How does a style manual work?
- How do you use a style manual?

### Materials

- Class set of style manuals (or access to online resource)
- New chart titled "Style Manual Contents"
- Example of a paper using required citation style (if covering that section)

# Introducing the Style Manual

## FOCUS LESSON

- Explain to the class that the purpose of the error journal work is to help students become more proficient in what is often called the *conventions* of standard written English.
- Point out that a “convention” is simply a way of doing or using something that is, in a certain situation or context, *conventional*—that is, normal, expected, or standard. In the case of writing, conventions include things such as spelling, punctuation, and sentence construction.
- Tell students that there are lots of resources designed to help them learn these conventions. One of the most useful of these resources is called a *style manual*. During the next few sessions, the class will take time to learn how to use a style manual.

### Examples of Online Style Manuals

- The Purdue OWL
- Syntaxis
- Grammarbook.com
- Grammar Monster
- Guide to Grammar and Writing
- Grammar Bytes

## WORK PERIOD

- Distribute a style manual to each student in the class. If you are using an online resource, students may need to work in pairs or small groups.
- Ask students to take a minute to pick up the manual and thumb through it, or to browse the website you’ve selected.
- After a minute, ask students what they notice. Have students read or point out the things that catch their eyes. List these items on the board or another display.
- Next, place students in pairs and give them five minutes to work out an answer to the following question:
- How is the style manual or web resource organized?
- At the end of five minutes, ask the pairs to take one or two minutes to briefly summarize their answer to the question.
- Convene a brief, whole-group discussion to negotiate a whole-class answer to the question.
- Capture the class’s answer on a chart that will remain in view in the classroom in the days ahead.
- Next, take students back to the table of contents, if applicable.
- Review the contents with the class and then ask students what it tells them about the book or web resource, how it is organized, and how they might use it. Capture the students’ responses on the board or another display.
- Next, write the heading, “Style Manual Contents,” on a chart and divide the chart into three columns titled: “Usage and Grammar”; “Punctuation”; and “Research Citation.”
  - » Note: While style manuals are typically organized around these ideas, you may wish to adjust these titles to match the corresponding section titles of your chosen style manual, as there is often some variance.

<b>Style Manual Contents</b>		
Usage and Grammar	Punctuation	Research Citation

- Ask the pairs to skim the contents of the “Usage and Grammar” section or its equivalent in the resource you are using. (For example, in *EasyWriter* this would fall under the two sections “Sentence Grammar” and “Sentence Style.”) Ask students to develop an answer to the following question:
  - » What kinds of information are contained in this section (or these sections) of the style manual?
- Give the pairs 4-5 minutes to do this work.
- Ask students to report out on their findings. Record their discoveries in the “Usage and Grammar” column on the chart. Keep in mind that the entries in this column will stand and operate as a definition of usage and grammar for the class.
- Repeat this process for the “Punctuation” and “Research Citation” columns of the chart as well.

## CLOSING

- Review the “Style Manual Contents” chart with the class.
- Reiterate the function of a style manual—it is a resource students can use to learn the conventions of written “standard” English.
- Explain to the class that they will continue this study of the style manual and its usage in more detail.

# Introducing the Usage and Grammar Section

## FOCUS LESSON

- If this work has been split into more than one class period:
  - » Remind students that this introduction to the style manual is designed to help them learn to use a resource that can, if used well, help them avoid and solve some of the most confounding problems they face as writers.
  - » Review the “Style Manual Contents” chart constructed during the last session. To do this, place students in groups of two or three and ask them to review the style manual using the 3-column chart as a guide.
- Explain to the class that they will now explore the first column of the chart, “Usage and Grammar,” more closely.
- Ask the groups to generate an answer to the following questions:
  - » What do these parts of the style guide tell us?
  - » How do they work?
  - » How would you use them?
- Give groups a few minutes to study these parts closely.
- Afterwards, convene a discussion where students share and negotiate their findings. Capture the gist of their findings on the chart.
- Explain to the class that during this next work period they will study “Usage and Grammar” (or “Sentence Grammar” and “Sentence Style”) in more detail.

## WORK PERIOD

- Have students remain in their small groups for the work period.
- Jot the following phrase on the board: “Make subjects and verbs agree.” Next to it write a sentence in which there is a subject/verb agreement error. An example: *If the microphones or the light are broken, please call the manager.*
- Ask students to locate subject/verb agreement in the contents section of the style manual and to find the page on which it is addressed.
- Have students study your chosen style guide’s entry on subject/verb agreement. Students should then do two things:
  1. They should take notes on the contents and on how the section is organized.
  2. They should be prepared to explain to the class how they used the entry to check and correct the error example on the board.
- Give groups time to make notes on the organization of the entry and to correct the sentence.
- Use this time to confer with groups about the work.

### Extra Practice with Usage and Grammar

- If you feel it would be helpful, students can work on a few more examples that typify the rules for “Usage and Grammar” found in these sections. Feel free to create a few of your own.
  - » Jot the following phrase on the board: “Revise sentences that contain dangling modifiers.” Next to it write a sentence in which there is a dangling modifier error. An example: *Running for the subway, the strap on my backpack broke.*
  - » Jot the following phrase on the board: “Be sure to use parallel structure.” Next to it write a sentence in which there is an error in parallel structure. An example: *Before leaving for vacation, my neighbor asked me to collect the mail, about watering his plants, and taking his dog on long walks.*
- Once again, students should study their guides’ entries for “dangling modifiers” and “parallel structure” and do the following things:
  1. They should take notes on the contents and on how the section is organized.
  2. They should be prepared to explain to the class how they used the entry to check and correct the error example on the board.
- Give groups time to make notes on the organization of the entry and to correct the sentence.
- Use this time to confer with groups about the work.

### CLOSING

- After the work period, convene a whole-class discussion of the class’s work and discoveries up to this point. Invite students to share their correction of the sample sentence and to explain the rules that support their correction.
- Review the questions that were posed at the beginning of class related to the “Usage and Grammar” section. Ask if anything should be added to or revised in the first column of the “Style Manual Contents” chart.

## Introducing the Punctuation Section

### FOCUS LESSON

- If this work has been split into more than one class period:
  - » Review the work of the previous session, including the “Style Manual Contents” chart, the organization of the style manual, and the process students went through to use an entry from the manual to correct a sentence.
- Explain to the class that the next work period will be devoted to learning to use the style manual to learn about conventions for punctuation.

## WORK PERIOD

- During this work period, repeat the process used during the last session for “Grammar and Usage,” but this time turn the class’s attention to the “Punctuation” column of the “Style Manual Contents” chart.
- For the “Punctuation” column of the “Style Manual Contents,” ask the groups to generate an answer to the following questions as they review the punctuation (sometimes called punctuation/mechanics) section of their guide.
  - » What does this section tell us?
  - » How does it work?
  - » How would you use it?
- Once again, place students in groups of two or three.
- Jot the following item on the board: “Quotation Marks.” Next to it write a sentence in which there is a quotation mark error. An example: *“I want my money back”, said the angry customer. “This stuff tastes awful”.*
- Ask students to locate quotation marks in the “Contents” section of the manual and to go to the page on which it is addressed.
- Have students study their guide’s “Quotation Marks” entry. They should then do two things:
  1. They should take notes on the contents and on how the section is organized.
  2. They should be prepared to explain to the class how they used the entry to check and correct the error example on the board.
- Give groups time to make notes on the organization of the entry and to correct the sentence.
- Afterwards, convene a whole-group discussion of the class’s work and discoveries. Invite students to share their corrections of the sample sentence and to explain the corrections and the rule.
- Have the class repeat the process using another entry—the period.

## CLOSING

- Afterwards, convene a whole-class discussion of the groups’ discoveries during the work period. Invite students to share their correction of the sample sentence and to explain the rules that support their correction.
- Afterwards, review the questions that were posed at the beginning of class related to the “Punctuation” section of the resource. Ask if anything should be added to or revised in the second column of the “Style Manual Contents” chart.
- Building from the previous session’s conversation, have students turn and talk with a partner for a minute and then share their answers with the class.

## Introducing the Research Citation Section

### FOCUS LESSON

- The “Research Citation” section of the style manual may only be useful to students at certain points in the year. This lesson follows the same pattern as the previous two and is intended for use during those points in the year when students need to learn about citing sources. Of course, the work that students do here should match the citation type they’ll be expected to use in their papers.
- Explain to the class that style manuals also supply writers with helpful information related to research-based writing.
- Ask the class to turn to the contents section of their style manual and to briefly skim over the items listed under the following (or similar) section: “Research Documentation” or Citation”: “MLA Style,” “APA Style,” and “Chicago Style.”
- Tell students which type of citation they will be responsible for learning and jot its name on the board. Tell students that they should ignore the sections covering other citation types.
- Have students take a minute to look over the contents of the citation section they need to learn. Ask them to make a few notes about its contents and its organization.
- Ask students to share what they found with the class. List their findings on the “Style Manual Contents” chart.
- Explain to the class that learning to cite sources is all about two things:
  3. Learning how sources are cited within sentences.
  4. Learning how to list sources in a bibliography or works cited page at the end of a paper.

### WORK PERIOD/CLOSING MEETING

- Distribute to students copies of a paper that uses the citation type (MLA, APA, etc.) they are expected to learn to use. Examples are readily available online if the teacher does not have any copies from previous classes.
- Place students in groups of two or three.
- Ask the groups to set aside their style manuals and study the citations inside the paper (save the works cited/bibliography section for later).
- Ask the groups to generate answers to the following questions:
  - What do they notice?
  - Given what they see, what would they say are the rules for citing sources *in the body of the paper*?
- Afterwards, convene a discussion of the groups’ findings. List summaries of their findings on the board or a chart.
- Next, have groups check a few of the entries using the style manual.
- Ask groups to report on their discoveries and to say what seems difficult and easy about citing sources in sentences and about using the style manual to do this work correctly.
- Next, repeat this same process with the bibliography or works cited section at the end of the paper.



# Teacher Guidelines for Reading and Marking Student Papers

Error journals are a place for students, with a teacher's help, to keep track of and learn to correct the writing errors they regularly make. In order for error journals to be effective, they must be an integral and regular part of a student's writing experience. What follows are a few guidelines for reading and marking student papers for the error journal work.

Read through each student's paper(s), looking for the *one or two* most prominent errors that student makes. Ignore, for now, all the other errors that student might make.

- After reading a student's work, go back and check or underline the lines or sentences in which the errors occur (see Example 1).
- Remember that a student benefits the most from learning to name the errors he or she is making in a particular line or sentence. Your "error reading" helps students zero in on sentences or lines that contain errors.
- If, even with the support of the teacher's checks or underlines, students aren't ready to find and name the errors on their own, teachers can also write the name of the error next to the sentence. If you do this, be sure to match the error names to the terms used in the style manual. Remember, however, that one goal of the error journal work is for students to learn to identify the type of error themselves. As students become more familiar with particular types of errors, teachers should gradually let go of naming the error and simply underline or check the line where it occurs.
- *Do not, under any circumstance, correct the error for the student or point directly to it. Simply mark the line or sentence and, next to that mark, jot down the name of the error.*
- Even when students' writings are heavy with errors, focus students' attention only on one or two of their most major errors, especially during their early experiences with error journals. Trying to help students with all their errors at once will simply overwhelm them. Remember that you are coaching students to learn to use a tool that, used often and well, will gradually give them a way to get on top of the errors that plague their writing.
- *Keep records of the types of errors you find students making. In cases where several or many students are making the same errors, you may want to develop a focus lesson on that particular convention for use with the whole class or a smaller group of students.*

## Example 1

Alejandro knew he had journeyed too far. The ominous clouds had tried to warn him.  
(run on) He attempted to bike home as quickly as possible before the storm struck but it was too late. The line of trees to his left disappeared as a torrent of rain roared toward him.  
Golf ball sized hail pelted his back. The wind gusts made pedaling almost impossible.

To support the error journal process, it is important for the teacher to underline the sentence where the error has occurred and, if need be, simply label the error.

## INTERSESSION C (OPTIONAL)

# Setting Up and Learning to Use the Error Journal

### AGENDA

- Students will set up their error journal.
- Students will see examples of what the teacher’s error markings will look like.
- Students will review the steps for using an error journal, copy the steps in their notebook, and see a demonstration of the error journal process being used to correct an error on a sample paper.
- Students will work in pairs to apply the error journal process to a second error from the sample paper.
- Students will work in pairs to correct the errors marked on one of their own papers.
- Students will participate in a class discussion of what was difficult about the error journal work.

**Teaching Note:** Students should complete the work of Intersession B before beginning the error journal work in this session.

### Common Core State Standards

- L.8.1; L.8.2; L.8.3

### Learning Objectives

- Students will set up and learn to use their error journal to correct marked errors in their writing.

### Guiding Questions

- How does the error journal process work?

### Materials

- Error journals (one per student)
- Student papers marked for error journal work
- Display copy of student paper (to model error journal work)
- Class set of style manuals (or access to online resource)

### FOCUS LESSON

- Explain to students that during this session, they will begin a round of error journal work. Tell students (or remind them) that an error journal is a tool a writer can use to notice, correct, and reflect on mistakes he or she frequently makes when writing.
- Take a few minutes to help students set up their error journals. There are several options for where students can maintain their error journals, as long as the work is consistently kept in one place:
  - » Pass out composition or spiral notebooks to each student and have students write their names on them and label them “Error Journal.” Students should create a simple table of contents section at the front of the notebook and number the first 20 or so pages.
  - » Another option is to make the error journal a sub-part of an already existing writer’s notebook. Some teachers have done this by flipping the notebook upside down and moving back-to-front with the error journal work, though if students fill up their notebooks and move onto a second one, they will leave their past work behind.
  - » If your students use binders, this can simply be a section in their binder.
  - » Lastly, if your students regularly write on laptops in class and use online style guides, you may find it simplest for students to create a digital error journal.

- Once the error journals are set up, hand back the student papers you marked during your error readings.
- Tell students that during this focus lesson, you are going to teach them how to use the error journal.
- Display a copy of one of the student papers you marked during the most recent error reading. (Be sure to ask permission before using the paper and avoid identifying the student on the display copy.)
- Use the student’s paper to show the class what your markings look like and the process. Explain that you read through each student’s writing, identified the one or two most prominent errors that marked his or her work, and then underlined or checked the lines where you found these errors.
  - » **Note:** You may find it helpful to establish a common set of editing marks and abbreviations with your class, or even to collaborate with other teachers to ensure common editing marks across subjects and grade levels. In these cases, make sure students have a copy of the marks and the names of the errors they indicate.
- Next, explain to students that their job is to fix the errors marked by following the steps in the “Error Journal Process” listed on the board or chart. Students should copy the “Error Journal Process” on the first page of their error journal or you can pass out copies to paste into their error journal. (See Appendix for copy-ready version.)

### **Error Journal Process**

1. Read over each sentence or line the teacher has marked.
2. Find the error in each line or sentence. (During this process, you can ask someone else for help, but you should only ask the teacher as a last resort.)
3. Complete the next three steps in your error journal. (Example 2 shows an example of an error journal entry.)
  - a. After you have found the error in one of the marked lines or sentences, write out the sentence “as is” on a page in your error journal. Label this sentence “Original Version.”
  - b. Underneath or next to that sentence, make a note of what’s wrong—in other words, what the error is—and explain the rule for usage in your own words, so you can understand it next time. Label this sentence “Error.”
  - c. Below that, write out a corrected version of the original sentence. Label this sentence “Corrected Version.”
4. When you have completed error journal entries for each error marked on a paper, go back and make the correction on your original paper.
5. Be sure to repeat the process described in steps 1-4 for each error marked in your paper.

- After students have copied this process on the first page of their journal, use the remainder of the focus lesson to model these steps in a way the whole class can see. *After you explain the rule for usage or the reasons why you made the corrections you did, have students turn to a partner and practice restating what they just heard you say about the error. They should take turns doing this, and, afterwards, volunteers should share their restatements with the class. This work will help students gain experience explaining errors in their own language.*

## WORK PERIOD

- After you have modeled the error journal process with an error from the student paper you selected for display, ask students to work with a partner to apply this process to the second student error from the same paper.
- When students are finished, work with them to negotiate how this entry should look in the error journal. (Additional sample error journal entries can be found in the Appendix of *Constructing an Error Journal*.) Please work to ensure that the entries are consistently labeled and organized.
- Next, either hand back (or, if you have already handed back marked papers, ask students to take out) a piece of their writing that has been marked for errors to work on during this session's work period. Explain that this is a practice round of error journal work—a time for them to try working through the error journal steps using their own writing work. The goal is not to correct an entire paper, but to clarify the error journal process.
- Place students in pairs. Tell students that they should work with their partners to find and correct the marked errors. Partners should support each other in this work.
- Use this time to circulate around the room, checking in and problem solving. Show students how to make proper entries in their error journal but resist the temptation to tell students what's wrong with their sentences or how to fix them. Instead, direct them to one another, to the style manual, and to other resources such as model texts and writing resource books.

### Example 2

Error Journal	
Original Version:	Alejandro attempted to bike home before the thunderstorm struck but it was too late.
Error:	I discovered that I did not include a comma before the coordinating conjunction. I didn't realize this needed to be done.
Corrected Version:	Alejandro attempted to bike home before the thunderstorm struck, but it was too late.

It is the student's responsibility to look up the error in the style manual and make an entry in their error journal.

## CLOSING MEETING

- Reconvene the class and ask students to consider the following question:  
    “What was difficult or strange about the error journal process?”
- Use this discussion as an opportunity to correct any misconceptions students have, so that the second round of error journal work is more successful.

## INTERSESSION D (OPTIONAL)

# Using the Style Manual During Error Journal Work

### AGENDA

- Students will work in pairs to apply the error journal process to another error from a sample student paper.
- Students will review, once again, the error journal process of finding an error, referencing it in the style manual, restating what the style manual says about the error, and correcting the error.
- Students will work in pairs to correct the errors marked on one of their papers.
- Students will participate in a class discussion of what was difficult about the error journal work.

**Teaching Note:** This session may be repeated with students if they need further practice with the error journal.

### FOCUS LESSON

- Distribute a style manual to each student in the class. If using an online resource, students may need to share.
- Place students in pairs.
- Display an “as is” sentence from a student’s paper for the class to see. (Be sure to ask permission before using the paper and avoid identifying the student in the display work.)
- Ask students to work in their pairs to find the error in the sentence. If it is an error students aren’t yet familiar with, identify the type of error as well.
- Next, look up the error in the style manual. (Guide students to turn to the same places you do so that they also learn how to look up the error.) Be sure to show the students that there are several ways to look up an error—by name, by the place of the error in the sentence, by key words (preposition, verb, noun, etc.).
- After students have looked up the error in their own manual, have them say back what they found out about it.
- Ask students to take a minute to craft a corrected version of the sentence and to jot down a few lines explaining what was wrong with the original sentence and why they made the corrections they did.
- As pairs are doing this work, circulate around the room, observing and coaching students by asking questions or helping them with their use of the style manual. Be sure not to tell students how to fix the sentence.

#### Common Core State Standards

- L.8.1; L.8.2; L.8.3

#### Learning Objectives

- Students will incorporate the use of the style manual into their error correction work.

#### Guiding Questions

- How does the style manual fit into the error journal process?

#### Materials

- Class set of style manuals (or access to online resource)
- Display copy of student paper (to model error journal work)
- Student papers marked for error journal work

- Call on students to share their work—their corrected sentences and their commentary. Capture these on a chart.
- Wrap up the focus lesson by demonstrating, once again, the steps for using the error journal outlined in the last session. To do this, create a sample error journal “page” on a display that the class can see. Import a student’s corrected version and commentary as you build this page.
- Answer any questions students have about the demonstration, the style manuals, or the error journal work.

## WORK PERIOD

- Hand back (or if you have already handed back marked papers, ask students to take out) a piece of their own writing that has been marked for errors. Explain that, as with the work period of the last session, this is a practice round of error journal work—a time for them to try working through the steps and using the style manual. The goal is not to correct an entire paper, but to clarify the error journal process.
- Place students in pairs, once again. Tell students that they should work with their partners to find and correct the errors in their papers. Partners should support each other in the work as they attempt to solve problems that arise.
- Use this time to circulate around the room, checking in and problem solving. Show students how to make proper entries in their error journals but resist the temptation to tell students what’s wrong with their sentences or how to fix them. (See Appendix for additional examples of student error journal entries.) Instead, direct them to one another, to the style manual, and to other resources such as model texts and writing resource books.

## CLOSING MEETING

- Reconvene the class and ask students to consider, once again, the following question:  
“What was difficult or strange about the error journal process?”
- Use this discussion as an opportunity to correct any misconceptions students have, so that the next round of error journal work is more successful.



## SESSION 6

# Introducing “It’s That It Hurts”: Comprehension Work

### AGENDA

- Students will listen to “It’s That It Hurts” and read along silently, marking the text and making notes in the margin of their student reader.
- Students will work with partners to craft a synopsis of the story that accounts for the narrator, key characters, and basic plot development.

### FOCUS LESSON

- Introduce the class to Tomás Rivera’s “It’s That It Hurts.” In preparation for this session’s work, ask students to review the brief biography of Tomás Rivera in their student reader.
- Explain to students that this is the other story they will do work with during this unit. Point out that the work with each text follows a pattern—comprehension work followed by interpretive work—and that, as such, this session will be devoted to a “getting oriented” reading of the story.
- Remind students of the larger objectives laid out in the first session of the unit:
  - » On one level, we are studying these stories because they are complex, interesting stories that are worth reading and discussing on their own.
  - » On another level, we are studying these stories because they offer opportunities to stretch important skills in our reading, discussing, and writing. We will continue to examine at how we read for understanding, how we construct an interpretation of a story, and how we build an argument to support our interpretation.

#### Learning Objectives

- Students will read and demonstrate a basic understanding of the characters and events in “It’s That It Hurts.”

#### Guiding Questions

- What are some strategies for comprehending a fictional text?

#### Materials

- A copy of “It’s That It Hurts” to read aloud
- “Comprehension Strategies” chart

#### The First Ten Minutes

Reserve the first 10 minutes for independent reading (or on occasion, alternate with vocabulary, writing fluency, syntax, or error journal work).





### **Biographical Sketch**

#### **Tomás Rivera (1935-1984)**

Tomás Rivera was a Chicano writer and educator. Born to migrant farmers, Rivera grew up working alongside his family in fields across the Midwest. Even in grade school, Rivera longed to be a writer—an aspiration that puzzled most of his family, but garnered the support of his grandfather, who kept him supplied with paper and pen and introduced him to the library.

Despite missing a considerable amount of school due to frequent moves and long days of work during harvest season, Rivera managed to become the first in his family to attend college, graduating from Southwest Texas State University in 1958 with a degree in English and minors in history, Spanish, and education.

Rivera taught high school English and Spanish while pursuing advanced degrees in the field of education. After receiving his Ph.D. from the University of Oklahoma, Rivera taught at several universities before being named chancellor of the University of California, Riverside, in 1979, a position he held until his death.

In addition to poems, short stories, and scholarly work, Rivera is perhaps best known for his book *...y no se lo tragó la tierra* (*The Earth Did Not Devour Him*), which received the first Premio Quinto Sol literary award to recognize and promote Chicano authors. “It’s That It Hurts”—the next story you will read in this unit—is one of the fourteen vignettes from this work.

Rivera left a legacy beyond his literary work. Schools, libraries, and community centers across the country bear his name as well as numerous scholarships and awards—all a testament to his advocacy for education and the Chicano community.



- Place the following three comprehension questions on the board:
  - » Who is telling the story? Where is he (physically) when he is telling it? What are the important things we learn about him in the story?
  - » Who are the other characters in the story?
  - » The story does some interesting things with time. It opens at the end of the story in a sense. What happens in the story? Work to create a retelling of the events that occurred in the order in which they happened. In other words, resequence them to answer this question: What are the big events in the story and in what order do they happen?
- Tell the class that during this session you would like to read the story aloud one time. Point out that at the end of the reading, students will have time to work on the three questions in groups of twos or threes, and that they should use the questions on the board to help them listen to the read-aloud.
- Encourage students to make notes in the margins of their student reader and to mark the text during the reading. If you have established a set of common

annotation marks, you may wish to remind students of these now. Again, we often find that simple works best (\*, !, ?, etc.)

- Direct students' attention back to the "Comprehension Strategies" chart created in the inquiry reflection at the end of Session 2. Ask the class, "What are the things you did and the steps you took to comprehend the first text in this unit?"

## WORK PERIOD

- Read "It's That It Hurts" aloud to the class.
- Students should read along silently during the reading and mark places in the text, or make brief notes, that relate to the comprehension questions on the board.

## CLOSING MEETING

- After the reading, give students time to convene in groups of two or three to work on the questions on the board. During this time, they should jot down notes from their conversation on a page in their literacy notebook.
- **Check for Understanding:** Monitor students' work at the end of the period to determine whether or not they understand the story, reviewing literacy notebooks if necessary. Whenever possible, respond to students' questions by redirecting them to the text with prompts like "See if you can find any moments in the text that might help you answer that" or "Review some of the places that you and your group members marked in the text as we read to see if that helps." Remember that students will continue to interact with and reread the text, so they do not need to be experts on it at this moment. Instead, use this time to determine whether or not a whole-class rereading is appropriate in the next session.

### Scaffolds and Modifications

- **Reading:** Chunking or modeling reading strategies. (See "Modeling Reading Strategies: What, How, and When" in Appendix for more information.)
- **Vocabulary:** Preteaching essential vocabulary is viewed as a specific scaffold for students who need it, rather than a standard practice. The following words may be worth reviewing in advance with students who require such a scaffold; otherwise, they are provided as a selection of possible words to review after the initial reading: *knoll*, *gringo*, *conch*, *compadre*, *padrino*.







## SESSION 7

# “It’s That It Hurts”: Wrapping Up the Comprehension Work

### AGENDA

- Students will reread “It’s That It Hurts.”
- Students will work with partners to confirm or revise their synopsis of the story that accounts for the narrator, key characters, and basic plot development.
- Students will share their understanding of the story by sharing out their answers to the comprehension questions in a whole-class setting.
- Students will identify and share out the important things learned about what takes place in the story.
- Students will reflect on the comprehension work they have been doing by quick-writing and discussing their answers to the following questions: “What are the things you did to answer this question and what was the order—as best you can remember—in which you did them?”

#### The First Ten Minutes

Reserve the first 10 minutes for independent reading (or on occasion, alternate with vocabulary, writing fluency, syntax, or error journal work).



**Teaching Note:** Once again, consider incorporating a second reading of the story into the beginning of this session’s work. Students can use this second reading to check for gaps in the comprehension work they did in the previous session.

#### Learning Objectives

- Students will demonstrate a basic understanding of the characters and events in “It’s That It Hurts.”
- Students will add to their list of processes for working to comprehend a short story.

#### Guiding Questions

- What are some strategies for comprehending a fictional text?
- In what ways are you becoming smarter about comprehension work?

#### Materials

- Copy of “It’s That It Hurts”
- Chart paper or other display
- “Comprehension Strategies” chart

## FOCUS LESSON/WORK PERIOD

- Convene the whole class to review and re-clarify (if needed) the comprehension questions introduced in the previous session:
  - » Who is telling the story? Where is he (physically) when he is telling it? What are the important things we learn about him in the story?
  - » Who are the other characters in the story?
  - » The story does some interesting things with time. It opens at the end of the story in a sense. What happens in the story? Work to create a retelling of the events that occurred in the order in which they happened. In other words, resequence them to answer this question: What are the big events in the story and in what order do they happen?

- Consider leading the class through a second reading of the story. As before, if students demonstrated a common and especially important misunderstanding last class (one that would not be easily resolved through whole-group discussion), direct students to resolve that misunderstanding by saying something like, "Last class, I heard from a lot of you that you thought \_\_\_\_\_. As you look back at the text and think through the comprehension questions, see if there are moments that might give us more information about that."

### Scaffolds and Modifications

- Reading: Second read-aloud, chunking and retelling.
- Speaking and Listening: Discussion norms, goal-setting.
- "See "Scaffolds and Modifications: Descriptions and Use" in the Appendix for more information on these and other options.



- Next, have students return to their small groups for 3-5 minutes to review their responses to the comprehension questions.

- **Check for understanding:** During this time, walk amongst the groups to see whether anyone is experiencing difficulty. Try to determine whether the difficulty is due to the text or to trouble working together as a group.
- Next, take 5-7 minutes to facilitate a whole-class discussion about the three comprehension questions. Use this time to help students articulate their understandings about the characters and the events in "It's That It Hurts." To verify understanding and to provide an artifact that students can consult in the sessions ahead, capture the class's answers to the comprehension questions on a chart or other display.

## CLOSING MEETING

- Different questions require students to do different work. During this closing meeting, take time to lead the class through a second round of step-back work with a different comprehension question.

- Direct the class's attention to this comprehension question:
  - » The story does some interesting things with time. It opens at the end of the story in a sense. What happens in the story? Work to create a retelling of the events that occurred in the order in which they happened. In other words, resequence them to answer this question: What are the big events in the story and in what order do they happen?
- Remind students that one reason we are studying these stories is because they help us think about how we *read for understanding*. We did this with the first story, and we will think about some of the same questions a second time. These reflections require you to identify strategies and steps that you used, which will help you (and other students) recall these strategies later and use them in other contexts: you may not even realize the work you are doing until you name it.
- **Inquiry reflection:** Review the question with the class and then, to help students reflect back on the work they did to answer it, lead the class through the following cycle of step-back work:
  1. Take a moment to reflect back on the work you did to answer the comprehension questions. Even if it did not seem difficult to you, think about each separate step you took along the way.
  2. Take 3-4 minutes to write down in your notebook a list that answers the following questions:
    - What are the things you did to answer this question and what was the order—as best you can remember—in which you did them? List everything that comes to mind, and mark anything new that you did, or anything you did differently from last time.
    - Compared to the first story, what was it like to do the comprehension work this time? Did you notice any differences? If so, why do you think it was different?
  3. Take your notes to a small-group discussion with two other students. For 2-3 minutes, the three of you should work together to share your lists and reflections. During this share out time, be sure to ask questions of one another as needed and, most importantly, to revise or add new items to your list. Your goal here should be to leave this short meeting with a list of things you did that is as detailed and accurate as possible.
  4. Finally, participate actively in a 3- to 5-minute long whole-group discussion about the “what are the things you did” question. Imagine that in this discussion you are working as a whole class to create an even more comprehensive list of the things a reader does when answering a comprehension question. After you have generated the ideas for the list, ask students about their experiences doing comprehension work for the second story, compared to the first.
- Capture the list the class generates during the whole-group discussion on a chart. Add any new items to the "Comprehension Strategies" chart begun in Session 2. Afterwards, post this list in the room so that students can consult it as needed.



**Scorable Moment:  
Formative**







## SESSION 8

# Introducing Interpretive Assignment #2

### AGENDA

- Students will form and discuss an interpretation of “It’s That It Hurts” in small groups, responding to the question “What is the ‘it’ that hurts?”
- Students will reference the text to support their interpretations.
- Students will take notes about their own and their classmates’ interpretations to help them with the interpretive writing to come.
- Students will reflect upon and share out their ideas about the process of conducting interpretive discussions.

### FOCUS LESSON

- On the board or a chart, write the interpretive question from “Interpretive Assignment #2” as well as the definition of a good argument. (You may choose instead to photocopy and distribute the information on the next page.) **Note:** *Do not share any possible answers to the question at this time. Also, do not share the assignment sheet found in the Appendix since that includes possible answers.*
- Remind students that an interpretation is an argument writers make about literary texts.
  - » Prompt students to recall the meaning of terms like claim, evidence, explanation (sometimes called warrant or analysis), and counterclaim. These are the basic parts of an argument.
  - » Poll students for their ideas about what counts as evidence in making an interpretation of a story. How might a person support their claim? Jot student suggestions on the board, and point out to students that they’ll be reviewing the evidence today to start forming a claim.

#### Learning Objectives

- In small groups, students will generate an initial attempt at a claim in response to the interpretive question and mark supporting moments in the text.

#### Guiding Questions

- What do you do in order to form an interpretation?

#### Materials

- Chart paper or other display
- “Comprehension vs. Interpretation” chart (from Session 5)

#### The First Ten Minutes

Reserve the first 10 minutes for independent reading (or on occasion, alternate with vocabulary, writing fluency, syntax, or error journal work).





## Preparation for Interpretive Assignment #2

For this assignment, you will write an argument about “It’s That It Hurts” that answers the question in the box below.

The first line in the story is “It hurts a lot”  
and the title is “It’s That It Hurts.”

*What is the “it” that hurts?*

Remember that this is your second attempt at interpretive writing in this study. Your goal in this paper should be to apply what you’ve learned so far about interpretive writing. Remember that while there can be lots of different interpretations, a good argument must have the following:

- A claim that answers the question.
- Text evidence that supports your claim.
- Explanations that show how that evidence supports your position.
- A response to other possible arguments or counterclaims.

As in the previous assignment, before you write your response you will have an opportunity to discuss the question in a small group and then, later, with the class as a whole. Members of the groups do not have to agree on an interpretation. The purpose of these discussions is to give you a chance to “try out” responses before writing, to hear other readers’ reactions to those responses, and to help each other identify examples to support and/or otherwise refine those responses. Be sure to take good notes during these discussions. These notes will help you track your thinking, ask better questions, and make your interpretive writing go much faster.

Be sure to bring your notes and a copy of “It’s That It Hurts” to these discussions, as you will need these to locate important passages in the story. Consider spending some time rereading the story and your notes as you prepare for your discussions.

## WORK PERIOD

- Place students in groups of twos or threes.
- Remind students that the purpose of the small-group work is to give them a chance to try out the interpretations they will write during Session 10. Remind them to take notes during these discussions, as this will help them craft their interpretive paper drafts. These notes will also help them participate in the whole-group conversation in the next session.

- Revisit with students the thinking they did about the differences between comprehension work and interpretive work. As you review this work, help students recall moments in the earlier work with the Walker text to illustrate the differences. Take care to pay particular attention to conversational moves students made that were either helpful or problematic.
- Direct students' attention back to the "Comprehension vs. Interpretation" chart created during the focus lesson of Session 5. What do we do when we form interpretations? These strategies can help as students practice this work once again.
- Review the norms for small group work and give the groups time to conduct their discussions.
- **Check for understanding:**
  - » Confer with groups about the work during this time. Be sure to remind and model for the groups how to use (reference, read from, point to) the text during these exchanges. Also, take time to show students how to jot notes and ideas down during these discussions.
  - » Observe the early interpretive moves students are making: Are there improvements you can celebrate with the class? Are there goals you can set for future discussions?
  - » Provided students are able to generate at least some ideas for claims and some relevant evidence to support them, they should be ready to continue to the next session's work.

### Scaffolds and Modifications

- **Speaking and Listening:** Discussion norms, goal-setting.
- **Reading:** Chunking (interpretive).
- **Tip:** Consider breaking up an especially long work period by checking in with the whole class in the middle. You might use questions like, "What is one thing you've found so far?" or "What is something you or your group are having trouble with right now?"



### Scorable Moment: Formative



## CLOSING MEETING

- Convene the whole class, and ask the question "What did you learn today about the 'it' that hurts?" Again, you are not seeking a full, developed interpretive discussion—just a quick charting of observations or ideas.
- Capture student ideas on a chart, so these ideas can be accessed later. Encourage students to write their classmates' ideas in their writer's notebooks, to help them with their upcoming writing assignment.
- During this debrief, pause to work with the students to locate and note the page and line numbers of passages they might want to cite.





## SESSION 9

# Interpretive Assignment #2: Whole-Class Discussion

### AGENDA

- Students will quickly compose an initial written response to the question “What is the ‘it’ that hurts?”
- Students will participate in a whole-class discussion, trying to answer the same question.
- Students will take notes about the points and ideas raised during the discussion.
- Students will think about and identify what they learned about the text that they didn’t know before the discussion.
- Students will reflect upon and share out any new things they learned today about forming interpretations, as well as review the major differences between comprehension and interpretive work.

### FOCUS LESSON

- Write the interpretive question on the board and revisit it with the class: “What is the ‘it’ that hurts?”
- Ask students to spend 10 minutes composing a written response to this question in their writer’s notebook. Explain to students that this initial writing exercise is aimed to help them in today’s whole-class discussion about this question. Explain to students that good responses will make a claim (a one-sentence answer to the question “What is the ‘it’ that hurts?”) and an explanation to back up the claim supported by textual evidence.
  - » Inform students that they will add to these responses at the end of class, and that while you plan to read through these to see their ideas and their thinking, they do not need to worry about writing it perfectly at this time. This is *writing-to-think* work.

#### Learning Objectives

- Students will share and support their responses to the interpretive question, clarifying, specifying, and modifying as needed.

#### Guiding Questions

- What do you do in order to form an interpretation?
- How can you contribute to a whole-class interpretive discussion?
- How is forming an interpretation different from responding to a comprehension question?

#### Materials

- “Criteria for a Good Discussion”
- “Comprehension vs. Interpretation” chart

#### The First Ten Minutes

Reserve the first 10 minutes for independent reading (or on occasion, alternate with vocabulary, writing fluency, syntax, or error journal work).



- » Walk around during this time to get a sense of students’ understanding of the text and task.
- After students have written for 10 minutes, take a few minutes to review the “Criteria for a Good Discussion.” (A copy-ready version can be found in the Appendix.) Explain to students that this session’s work period will be dedicated to a whole-group discussion of the question in “Interpretive Assignment #2.”

**Sentence Stems**

- I agree with \_\_\_\_\_ because...
- I disagree with \_\_\_\_\_ because...
- I don’t understand...
- Can you please explain...
- Can you tell me more about...
- What if...
- What you said makes me think/wonder...

- Explain that you, as the teacher, will NOT be participating in the discussion. Instead, you will be charting the ideas and references that students focus on in their conversation. Help students to understand that they should be having an “adult-like” discussion, where they don’t necessarily have to raise their hands, but rather can wait for the right moment to jump into the discussion to make a point.
- If students have a hard time with this, you may once again consider introducing the “Sentence Stems.” But try conducting a discussion at least once before introducing the stems. Many groups of students won’t need them.

**WORK PERIOD**

- Ask students to take a moment to gather their notebooks and their copies of the story.
- Tell students that they will have 20 minutes to complete their class discussion. *(Twenty minutes seems to be the right amount of time to allow a class of 30 students a chance to talk. Sometimes, when you are first beginning whole- class discussions, you might begin with less time—10 minutes, for example. After a while though, classes are often able to sustain them for 30–40 minutes.)*
- To begin the discussion, revisit the interpretive question with the class. Then, invite the students to begin the discussion. Using the board, a typed document on display, or chart paper, quietly chart students’ ideas (and corresponding text references) as they share. Many ideas will be similar, so not every idea needs to be recorded, but try to capture the gist of the different ideas without adding your own thoughts. If students have not referenced the text, you might ask something like, “What in the text makes you think that?” Otherwise, try as much as possible to remain quiet and release the conversation to the students.



**Scorable Moment:  
Formative**

Take notes on a seating chart to keep track of who says what so you can assess their discussion efforts.



## Criteria For a Good Discussion

*What are students saying and doing during discussion?*

### Students are...

- Mindful of group/classroom norms.
- Contributing ideas to the group discussion.
- Supporting ideas with specific moments in the text.
- Referring to specific page numbers, line numbers, or quotations in the text to support their arguments.
- Using sentence stems.
- Listening to each other's ideas and building on them.
- Questioning each other's ideas.
- Pausing after someone is finished speaking.

### Students are not...

- Disregarding group/classroom norms.
- Sitting silently and disengaging from the discussion.
- Drifting to off-topic conversations.
- Making generalizations that are not supported in the text.
- Dominating the conversation.
- Being rude, or using disrespectful language.
- Displaying anger when somebody doesn't agree with them.
- Interrupting someone who is talking.

- Work hard to get comfortable with periods of silence. Make it the job of the students to end the silence, not the job of the teacher. You may jump into the conversation to do any of the following, but do NOT attempt to answer the question yourself, or to steer students toward looking at a particular piece of the text, or considering a certain answer. Also, resist the temptation to praise students' ideas. Instead, do one of the following:
  - » Let students know when they have 5 minutes left.
  - » Encourage students who have not spoken up, when there are only a few minutes left, to take this opportunity to speak.
  - » Direct students' attention to specific items on the "Criteria for a Good Discussion" chart.

### Scaffolds and Modifications

- Speaking and Listening: Discussion norms, goal-setting, turn-and-talk, posing questions, course correction.



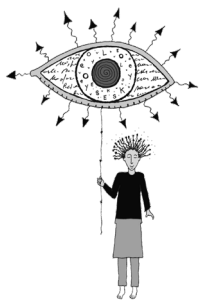
## CLOSING MEETING



- **Check for understanding:** Ask students to take 3-5 minutes to make any additional notes or changes to the responses they wrote at the beginning of class. Their initial notes, coupled with their notes after the discussion, should help you understand their thinking about the text and how their thinking has grown or changed. Students should consider some of the following:
  - » Add notes, references, or ideas from the discussion that you had not considered in your earlier writing. These might add to or expand your initial ideas, or they might be new or different ideas entirely—it is perfectly acceptable to have changed your mind during the discussion.
  - » Include notes on at least one other perspective from the discussion that you could use as a counterclaim when you write about this text.
- Then, review the T-chart the class helped generate during Session 5 (how interpretation is different from comprehension work).
- Next, ask the class to answer individually in writing the following “step-back” questions about doing interpretive work:
  - » What new things did you learn about forming interpretations from our discussion today? Was there anything different in your experience this time, compared to the interpretive work with the first text?
  - » What are the major differences between comprehension work and interpretive work?
- Be sure to add any new items to the T-chart as students share their responses.

**Scorable Moment:  
Formative**





## SESSION 10

# Studying Drafts, Composing Drafts

### AGENDA

- Students will study effective interpretive writing.
- Students will see examples and non-examples of
  - » Clearly stated interpretive positions.
  - » Compelling explanations that are grounded in the text.
  - » Exemplary phrases, transitions, citations, and other writing moves.
- Students will learn about the importance of demonstrating an authoritative interpretive disposition in their writing—in other words, “sounding like you know what you’re talking about.”
- Students will write their interpretive papers about “It’s That It Hurts.”

**Teaching Note:** Prior to this session, pull together a set of interpretive papers on “Everyday Use” from “Interpretive Assignment #1.” To do this, look for places where students interpret, or attempt to interpret, the text or look for interesting fragments of interpretive work that will help you illustrate the following items:

- Clearly stated positions/interpretive statements.
- Compelling explanations grounded in specific passages in the story.
- Elegant phrases, transitions, or citations, including phrases used to reference or cite a passage from the story.

### Learning Objectives

- Students will clarify the traits of strong interpretive/argument writing after examining samples of student work.
- Students will demonstrate an understanding of the basic features of an argument as they draft a response to the interpretive question.

### Guiding Questions

- What does good interpretive writing look like?
- In what ways are you becoming smarter about writing interpretive papers?

### Materials

- Examples of interpretive writing for study
- Charts showing exemplary moves for interpretive writing
- “Interpretive Assignment #2: ‘It’s That It Hurts’”
- “Checklist for Interpretive/Argument Writing”
- “Rubric for Interpretive/Argument Writing” (optional)



**The First Ten Minutes**

Reserve the first 10 minutes for independent reading (or on occasion, alternate with vocabulary, writing fluency, syntax, or error journal work).



The easiest way to conduct the work in this session is to project excerpts of papers on the board or screen. As always, be sure to obtain permission from students to use their work.

The work in this session has strong connections to Session 1-B from *Writing Text-Based Arguments*. Teachers who wish to adapt the work for a different writing focus are encouraged to review that session (or others from the same guide) for ideas.

**FOCUS LESSON**

- Tell the class that the purpose of this focus lesson is to hold a discussion with the class about effective interpretive writing.
- Review the basic principles for good interpretive writing:
  - » A claim that answers the question.
  - » Text evidence that supports your claim.
  - » An explanation that shows how that evidence supports your position.
  - » A response to other possible arguments or counterclaims.
- Tell students that you want them to help you consider excerpts from student responses to “Interpretive Assignment #1.” The aim is to exit this work with a clearer sense of what good interpretive writing is like. Options for facilitating this conversation might include the following:
  - » Show students an interpretive statement and ask them “What would make this interpretation more compelling?”
  - » Show students an interpretive statement with a so-so explanation and ask students to help you revise it.
  - » Show students a well-written passage that needs help with citations and ask students to help you revise it.
  - » Show the class an almost-interpretive statement and ask the class to help you phrase it so it’s clearer, then list notes to explain the interpretation.
- One of the most difficult things for students to acquire is the ability to sound like they are delivering a compelling interpretation. This might be termed an “authoritative interpretive disposition.” In all of the scenarios you consider with students insist that they do the following: Act as if they are an expert. *How would an expert write that? What does an expert sound like? How does an expert cite sources? Ask them to “try on” this persona during this work.*
- During this conversation, be sure to guide students to make use of the story and their notes.
- Use this focus lesson time to walk students through one model. Encourage them to take notes and to copy examples into their notebooks.
- Consider creating chart-sized versions of exemplar papers or passages, or a digital collection of moments that illustrate exemplary moves. These charts should be marked and annotated and posted so that students can reference them during the interpretive writing work ahead.

## WORK PERIOD

- Distribute copies of “Interpretive Assignment #2: Writing About ‘It’s That It Hurts.’” (See Appendix for copy-ready version.)
  - » If you are using the “Checklist for Interpretive/Argument Writing” and/or the “Rubric for Interpretive/Argument Writing” be sure to review these tools and any area you may be focusing on in particular.
  - » Remind students that the task sheet provides a few possible interpretations of the story. These are provided in this foundational unit as a scaffold to the writing task, particularly the requirement that students “make reference to alternative positions.” There is no requirement that students use these claims—in fact, interpretations generated from class discussion may be more compelling—but any of these would be appropriate to argue, or to use as a counterclaim.
- Take a minute to review, once again, the criteria for a good interpretation listed on the assignment sheet:
  - » A claim that answers the question.
  - » Text evidence that supports your claim.
  - » An explanation that shows how that evidence supports your position.
  - » A response to other possible arguments or counterclaims.
- Remind the class that there isn’t a simple right or wrong answer to the question. Each student should aim to form an interpretation and to explain that interpretation by linking it to specific passages in the story.
- This is an excellent time to have students review their earlier writing and the feedback they received from their first paper. You may even wish to ask students to set specific goals for this paper using a reflection similar to the following:
 

"In my last paper, one thing I did well was \_\_\_\_\_. In this paper, my goal for improvement is to \_\_\_\_\_."
- Give students this time to write their interpretive papers in response to the assignment for “It’s That It Hurts.” This is independent work. Remind students that during this work they should refer to the story and their notes, such as the quick write from Session 9, the assignment sheet, the checklist, and any charts the class generated in this or the previous sessions.
- **Check for understanding:** Use this time to confer with students about this work. Consider whether common student questions, difficulties, or errors merit a focus in either the next session or during the next writing task. If you set a particular focus in your writing expectations, observe students’ performance in this area.



## ARGUMENT

### Interpretive Assignment #2 Writing About "It's That It Hurts"

For this assignment you will write an argument about "It's That It Hurts" that answers the question in the box below. It will sound familiar to you because you participated in a discussion about it in the previous session's work:

The first line in the story is "It hurts a lot"  
and the title is "It's That It Hurts."

*What is the "it" that hurts?*

There are many possible correct answers to this question. Here are a few:

- The "it" is that his father will be disappointed.
- The "it" is the shame of discrimination, specifically of being unfairly expelled after fighting "a couple of our boys."
- The "it" is a big realization about the nature of the world he lives in and his place in it.

Your job is to think through the possible answers—both the answers listed above as well those that you generate on your own or with the class—and choose the one you think is best. Then write a compelling, 1- to 2-page argument that supports your answer.

Use your "Checklist for Interpretive/Argument Writing" to help you remember everything you must include in your writing, and be sure to draw on all of your discussion notes and class charts as you write. These are valuable resources that will help you complete the assignment.

When you finish writing, make sure your argument includes

1. A claim that answers the question;
2. Support for the claim with evidence from the text;
3. An explanation that shows how that evidence supports your position; and
4. Commentary on potential counterclaims or alternate positions.

#### Citing Evidence

When you refer to a specific line or moment from our unit texts, make sure you quote it accurately and tell what page the quotation or moment is from. Here's an example of a sentence in which a line from the text is quoted:

As the narrator reflects on the fight, Rivera writes that he doesn't "remember any more how or when I hit him but I know I did" (26).

Please notice three things about this example:

1. The author of the quote is clearly identified so the reader knows which text it came from.
2. There are double quotation marks around the part that Rivera wrote, and this quotation is copied exactly as Rivera wrote it.
3. The page the quotation comes from is placed in parentheses *after* the last double quotation mark but *before* the period. If the author is not identified in the sentence, place the author's last name inside the parentheses, before the page number and without a comma between them, like this: (Rivera 26).

## CLOSING MEETING

- Ask students to turn in their papers. (*Students who do not finish their paper during class time should complete the assignment for homework.*) Tell students that you will review their drafts, and with permission, photocopy excerpts to consider with the class later on. Remind the class that the main purpose of this unit is to introduce students to interpretive reading, thinking, talking, and writing.
- Ask students to comment on the ways the focus lesson work influenced their writing. Specifically, ask them to reflect on what it felt like to try out or use academic language and academic moves: Was it hard? Easy? What did it feel like?

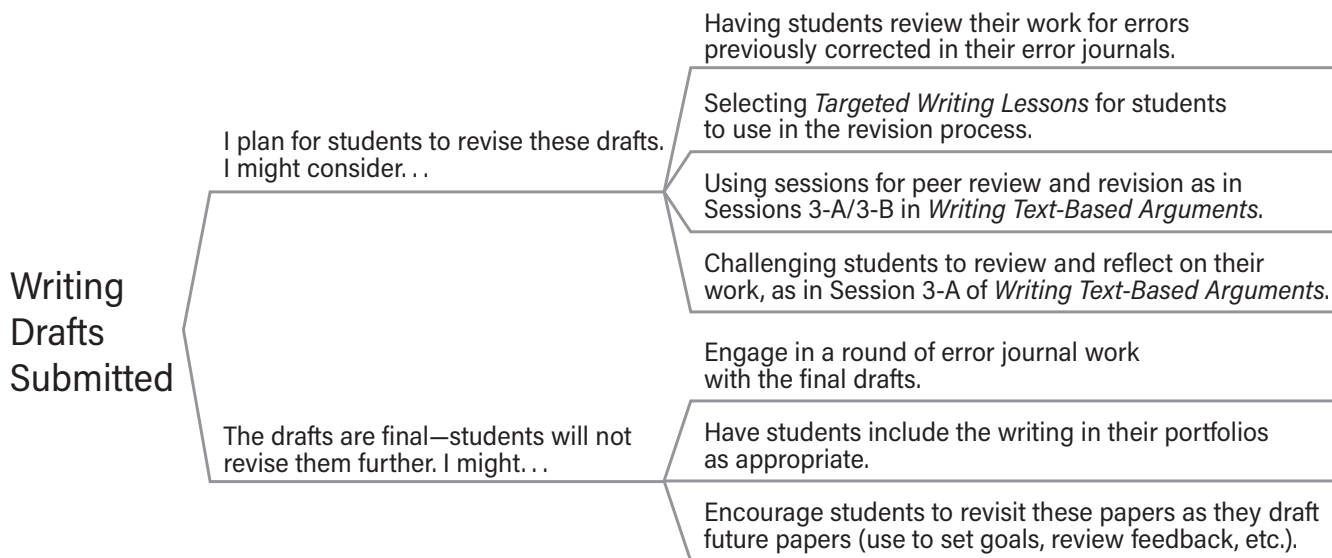
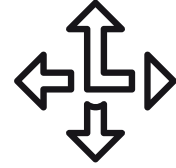
**Teaching Note:** Giving good feedback is both important and, at times, difficult. Not all feedback is effective, and some is even counterproductive. We encourage teachers to keep in mind some of the following recommendations:

- Jan Chappuis (2009) writes that good feedback “limits corrective information to the amount of advice the student can act on,” which may vary between students. Too much feedback can be overwhelming and difficult to process, in addition to being quite time-consuming to produce.
- Give feedback while students have a chance to act on it. Feedback returned along with a final grade is often ignored.
- If you are pointing out a strength, describe specifically what the student has done well. (“This introduction gives me a clear understanding of your focus.”)
- For intervention feedback, be clear about the need. Comments can be focused on describing what is present, on posing a question, or on making a clear recommendation—as long as you don’t solve the problem for the student. Consider the following:
  - » “These sentences all begin with the same phrase.”
  - » “Can you think of some different ways of beginning these sentences?”
  - » “Try rearranging or combining some of these sentences to add variety.”

Instead of simply saying “repetitive” or offering new sentence starters for the student, each of these comments gives the student a clear, manageable thought problem to solve.

# Next Steps for Student Writing

Student writing presents the teacher with many choices for how to respond. If the writing is intended to produce a polished draft, it is usually appropriate to allow students opportunities for review, reflection, and feedback before scoring the final product. Research indicates that as soon as a grade or score appears on a piece of writing, students focus on the grade rather than on the feedback, and that feedback is most effective when students have an opportunity to modify or change their work as a result (Wiliam 2018).



## WORKS CITED

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# Appendix

Criteria for a Good Discussion

"Modeling Reading Strategies: What, How, and When"

Interpretive Assignment #1: Writing About "Everyday Use"

Checklist for Interpretive/Argument Writing

A Note On Using Rubrics

Rubric for Interpretive/Argument Writing

Interpretive Assignment #2: Writing About "It's That It Hurts"

Scaffolds and Modifications: Descriptions and Use



## Criteria For a Good Discussion

*What are students saying and doing during discussion?*

### **Students are...**

- Mindful of group/classroom norms.
- Contributing ideas to the group discussion.
- Supporting ideas with specific moments in the text.
- Referring to specific page numbers, line numbers, or quotations in the text to support their arguments.
- Using sentence stems.
- Listening to each other's ideas and building on them.
- Questioning each other's ideas.
- Pausing after someone is finished speaking.

### **Students are not...**

- Disregarding group/classroom norms.
- Sitting silently and disengaging from the discussion.
- Drifting to off-topic conversations.
- Making generalizations that are not supported in the text.
- Dominating the conversation.
- Being rude, or using disrespectful language.
- Displaying anger when somebody doesn't agree with them.
- Interrupting someone who is talking.

## Modeling Reading Strategies: What, How, and When

### *What should I model?*

Strong readers use a wide variety of strategies to make sense of their reading. If you pay attention to yourself as a reader, you are likely to notice any number of instructional possibilities: *Readers pay extra attention when something unexpected happens; readers watch how other characters react in a story; readers sometimes pause to reflect at the end of a chapter.* In addition, however, there are some “high value” strategies that have been well-researched and are known to be particularly helpful. Here is a brief list of a few:

**Monitoring comprehension:** Strong readers pay attention to their own understanding of what they are reading and stop to take action if they realize they aren’t “getting it.” This strategy is especially important given that most other strategies depend on the reader realizing when their comprehension has broken down.

**Summarizing sections of the text:** Used both to repair understanding and to keep track during complex readings, this strategy is simply pausing occasionally to sum up what is being said in the text. It can be a quick mental note or a note in the margins of the text: “Basically, the author is saying \_\_\_\_.”

**Questioning the text/author:** This strategy encompasses a range of possibilities, all focused on keeping the reader “in conversation” with the text and the author of the text. Essentially, this strategy is about pausing to ask oneself questions like,

- “Why did the author choose to do this particular thing in this particular way at this particular time?”
- “What does the author mean by this? What is the author doing or hinting at?”
- “How does this connect to what the author was saying earlier?”

If the reader realizes that they’re having trouble answering their own questions, they should go back and reread.

**Making connections to prior knowledge:** Students bring a wide range of prior knowledge to the classroom, but even those with knowledge about a topic, don’t always know what to do with that knowledge while reading. As they begin any reading, readers should think about what they already know about the topic or setting—whether the reading is fiction or informative—and as they read, they should pause sometimes to consider how what they are reading connects to what they already know: Does it confirm or repeat ideas they already know? Does it add new information or details? Does it go against things they thought they knew?

**Tracking and thinking about text structure:** Both narrative and informational texts have common structures and patterns they follow. Narratives typically follow some version of Freytag’s model (exposition, conflict and rising action, climax, falling action, denouement); expository texts are often organized into clear chapters with subheadings and topic labels (and further into structures like compare/contrast, lists, etc.). Strong readers think about the different parts of a text and how they fit together.

Note that identifying the structure is not the skill in focus here—rather, thinking about the parts and how they fit together is. Thus, learning structure labels is not as significant for this practice as is the question how does this part of the text relate to other parts of the text? Labels can be taught as they are needed.

**Making inferences:** No writing is ever explicit enough to avoid the need for inferential reasoning—essentially, educated guessing supported by other background knowledge and details in the text. In addition to thinking about the literal, explicit meaning of the words on the page, readers should think about the unspoken meanings or implications as well. In this way, it is closely related to questioning the text or author: “Based on what the text says and other details I already know, what can I infer from this passage?”

### ***How should I model reading strategies?***

For this, we recommend the well known *I do / we do / you do* approach. Strategies should be explicitly defined and modeled for students, briefly. This should include some discussion of the purpose of the strategy and the circumstances in which it might be used. During the modeling, the teacher should read from a selected text and think aloud, focusing only on the strategy in question. Students should then be given an opportunity to practice the strategy as well with supervision and feedback before being invited to use it independently. After independent practice, the teacher may ask students if and how they used the strategy during their reading.

It bears emphasizing that reading strategies—and *the practice of reading strategies*—are only useful when the texts students are reading are challenging enough to require them. “Practicing” reading strategies with simple texts does not prepare students to use those strategies when they are actually needed; rather, it is effectively busy work that slows and hampers their reading. Students who only practice using reading strategies with texts they can already understand are likely to believe the strategies are useless and redundant—and in those cases, they will be right.

### ***When and how long should I model reading strategies?***

Reading strategies like those discussed above are very helpful, but they do not need to be the subject of extensive, lengthy instruction throughout the year, every year. Based on extant studies, literacy specialist and researcher Timothy Shanahan (2016) suggests that about six weeks of instruction that includes reading strategies is appropriate. Once students have received instruction in these strategies, it would make sense occasionally to review them or point students back to their strategy toolbox as needed. The beginning of the year is a good time to take stock of what students have already been taught and how much they know.

## ARGUMENT

### Interpretive Assignment #1 Writing About "Everyday Use"

For this assignment you will write an argument about "Everyday Use" that answers the question in the box below. It will sound familiar to you because you participated in a discussion about it in the previous session's work:

At the end of the story, Maggie smiles—"But a real smile, not scared."  
*Why isn't Maggie scared anymore?*

There are many possible correct answers to this question. Here are a few:

- Because for the first time, her mother stood up to Dee on her behalf.
- Maggie realizes that her life is not inferior to her sister's.
- She's no longer afraid of her sister because she understands that she (Maggie) has inherited her family's legacy.

Your job is to think through the possible answers—both the answers listed above as well those that you generate on your own or with the class—and choose the one you think is best. Then write a compelling, 1- to 2-page argument that supports your answer.

Use your "Checklist for Interpretive/Argument Writing" to help you remember everything you must include in your writing, and be sure to draw on all of your discussion notes and class charts as you write. These are valuable resources that will help you complete the assignment.

When you finish writing, make sure your argument includes

1. A claim that answers the question;
2. Support for the claim with evidence from the text;
3. An explanation that shows how that evidence supports your position; and
4. Commentary on potential counterclaims or alternate positions.

#### Citing Evidence

When you refer to a specific line or moment from our unit texts, make sure you quote it accurately and tell what page the quotation or moment is from. Here's an example of a sentence in which a line from the text is quoted:

Near the end of the story, Walker describes a dramatic scene where Mama "did something I never had done before: hugged Maggie to me, then dragged her on into the room, snatched the quilts out of Miss Wangero's hands and dumped them into Maggie's lap" (18).

Please notice three things about this example:

1. The author of the quote is clearly identified so the reader knows which text it came from.
2. There are double quotation marks around the part that Walker wrote, and this quotation is copied exactly as Walker wrote it.
3. The page the quotation comes from is placed in parentheses *after* the last double quotation mark but *before* the period. If the author is not identified in the sentence, place the author's last name inside the parentheses, before the page number and without a comma between them, like this: (Walker 18).

## Grade 8

### Student Checklist for Interpretive/Argument Writing

#### Comprehensive Understanding of Issues

- I write about the text in a way that shows that I fully understand it.
- I support my claim or position by selecting and organizing evidence from the text.
- I give reasons that clearly explain how the evidence I chose supports my claim or position.

#### Organization

- My response is logical and is organized around the facts and reasons for my clearly stated claim.
- My response is well organized throughout my writing.
- I am clear and explicit about the way I relate my claim to reasons and evidence.
- I use specific and helpful words, phrases, and clauses to connect my claims to reasons and evidence.
- I clearly show the relationships between the parts of my response.
- I have a conclusion that makes sense. It follows from the argument and connects back to my introduction.

#### Development

- I discuss information related to my claim that sets a context to help my reader understand my argument.
- I show that I understand the text by citing sufficient evidence from the text.
- The evidence I use is relevant and accurate.
- I use quotes and paraphrases of the text in a way that feels smooth and seamless.
- I explain how my claim and evidence compare with alternate positions.

#### Language Conventions

- I use correct spelling.
- I use correct grammar.
- My writing sounds formal.
- I went back and made sure that the words I used in my writing helped me explain my ideas.

## A Note on Using Rubrics

The Inquiry By Design Rubric for Interpretive/Argument Writing is a standards-based rubric describing what a student should know and be able to do in a given writing type by the end of the year. A rubric like this serves many purposes:

1. Broadly speaking, it sets out an instructional roadmap of exactly what students are expected to know and be able to do by the end of the year.
2. Applied to a specific paper, it is a touchstone resource that helps a teacher describe student work, and in doing so, articulate what a particular student needs to do or learn next in order to improve performance and deepen understanding.
3. Viewed as a data set, a rubric can inform what instruction the teacher chooses to prioritize for a class, given the performance profiles made possible by the rubric.
4. Within the classroom, it provides the language and vocabulary for conversation around and about language performance, making it a cornerstone of student/teacher conferencing and peer review.
5. Under appropriate conditions, a rubric can also help a teacher generate grades for student work.

The first four points require deliberate practice to develop and are discussed at greater length in other Inquiry By Design's resources (see for example, *Writing Text-Based Arguments* and *Rubrics for Writing*). The final detail, however, often overshadows the previous four, and so a word of caution is merited: Please do not hold students accountable for skills they have not yet been taught. For example, in the 8th grade standards, students are asked to explain the relationship between claims and alternative positions in their writing. If the teacher has not yet provided any direction or instruction regarding this, it would be a disservice to assign students lower grades for not including such explanations.

There are more options for rubric use than can be discussed here, but a few methods that can help responsibly inform grading include:

1. Understanding the rubrics from the students' previous grade level and beginning the year with these rubrics, then amplifying them with additional grade-level aspects and details as instruction is provided.
2. Co-constructing a classroom rubric with students and, again, adding new requirements following instruction and targeted practice.
3. Introducing the rubric one category at a time, delivering the necessary instruction, and scoring primarily according to that category's requirements. (For example, based on writing samples, a teacher might first choose to focus on "Organization," teach the appropriate grade-level skills, and score the first set of papers only in this category.)

These are not the only possible solutions, but they are offered as examples of how a teacher might use a rubric to support responsible grading practices that live up to the old adage, "First, do no harm."

**Grade 8**  
**Rubric for Interpretive/Argument Writing**

	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
	<b>The student response...</b>	<b>The student response...</b>	<b>The student response...</b>	<b>The student response...</b>
<b>Comprehensive Understanding of Issues</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates a comprehensive understanding of the text or topic by selecting, organizing and providing explicit reasons and appropriate evidence from the text that support a clear claim.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates a reasonable understanding of the text or topic by providing general support through reasons and evidence that are relevant to a claim.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates a superficial understanding of the text or topic and provides some support for a loosely stated claim, with reasons and evidence that are only minimally text-based.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates no understanding of the topic.</li> </ul>
<b>Organization</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is logical and establishes and maintains a coherent organizing structure that makes explicit the relationship between the claim, warrant, accurately cited text-based evidence, and counterclaims.</li> <li>• Employs the use of connecting words, phrases, and clauses to establish coherence and signal the major sections of the text.</li> <li>• Provides a conclusion that follows from the argument and/or ties to the introduction.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses an organizing structure that links the claim, warrant, accurately cited text-based evidence, and counterclaim.</li> <li>• Employs some words, phrases, and clauses to signal the major sections of the text.</li> <li>• Provides a conclusion that ties to or follows from the argument.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishes a loosely linked organizing structure to explain the relationship between the claim, warrant, and at least some accurately cited text-based evidence.</li> <li>• Embeds a brief mention of a counterclaim or claims.</li> <li>• Employs a few organizing words.</li> <li>• Provides a brief concluding statement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attempts to organize ideas through a focus on claim and evidence but does not explain their relationship.</li> <li>• Does not employ connecting words to signal major sections of the paper.</li> <li>• Does not address counterclaims.</li> <li>• Provides a brief concluding statement.</li> </ul>
<b>Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides a context specific to the claim to facilitate reader (audience) understanding.</li> <li>• Cites textual evidence that is relevant, convincing, detailed, and accurate.</li> <li>• Quotes, paraphrases, and cites evidence correctly and smoothly.</li> <li>• Explains the relationship between the claim and alternative positions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embeds the claim in a very general context.</li> <li>• Cites some textual evidence that is loosely linked to the claim.</li> <li>• Quotes evidence to support the claim but does so in a stilted manner.</li> <li>• Links the alternate position to the claim in a cursory manner.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides only a brief contextual reference for the claim.</li> <li>• Provides only partial or uneven evidence for the claim, with only an indirect reference to the text.</li> <li>• Weakly integrates evidence from sources or fails to include evidence from sources altogether.</li> <li>• Fails to integrate or explain alternate perspectives, or fails to include alternate perspectives at all.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides no context for the claim.</li> <li>• Provides evidence for the claim that is vague and/or weak.</li> <li>• Includes only minimal evidence from sources and evidence that is included may reflect erroneous understanding of the text or topic.</li> </ul>
<b>Language and Syntax</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintains a formal style and tone appropriate to purpose and audience.</li> <li>• Maintains the precise meaning of the text through the use of specialized and appropriate vocabulary.</li> <li>• Employs syntax, capitalization, and punctuation to effectively express meaning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishes a fairly consistent formal style.</li> <li>• Uses vocabulary that is generally appropriate to purpose and audience.</li> <li>• Employs a variety of sentence structures and uses capitalization and punctuation correctly.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expresses ideas unevenly using simplistic vocabulary and syntax.</li> <li>• May have some grammatical errors but these do not impede meaning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates a limited understanding of language and syntax.</li> <li>• Contains frequent grammatical errors that obscure meaning.</li> </ul>

## ARGUMENT

### Interpretive Assignment #2 Writing About "It's That It Hurts"

For this assignment you will write an argument about "It's That It Hurts" that answers the question in the box below. It will sound familiar to you because you participated in a discussion about it in the previous session's work:

The first line in the story is "It hurts a lot"  
and the title is "It's That It Hurts."

*What is the "it" that hurts?*

There are many possible correct answers to this question. Here are a few:

- The "it" is that his father will be disappointed.
- The "it" is the shame of discrimination, specifically of being unfairly expelled after fighting "a couple of our boys."
- The "it" is a big realization about the nature of the world he lives in and his place in it.

Your job is to think through the possible answers—both the answers listed above as well as those that you generate on your own or with the class—and choose the one you think is best. Then write a compelling, 1- to 2-page argument that supports your answer.

Use your "Checklist for Interpretive/Argument Writing" to help you remember everything you must include in your writing, and be sure to draw on all of your discussion notes and class charts as you write. These are valuable resources that will help you complete the assignment.

When you finish writing, make sure your argument includes

1. A claim that answers the question;
2. Support for the claim with evidence from the text;
3. An explanation that shows how that evidence supports your position; and
4. Commentary on potential counterclaims or alternate positions.

#### Citing Evidence

When you refer to a specific line or moment from our unit texts, make sure you quote it accurately and tell what page the quotation or moment is from. Here's an example of a sentence in which a line from the text is quoted:

As the narrator reflects on the fight, Rivera writes that he doesn't "remember any more how or when I hit him but I know I did" (26).

Please notice three things about this example:

1. The author of the quote is clearly identified so the reader knows which text it came from.
2. There are double quotation marks around the part that Rivera wrote, and this quotation is copied exactly as Rivera wrote it.
3. The page the quotation comes from is placed in parentheses *after* the last double quotation mark but *before* the period. If the author is not identified in the sentence, place the author's last name inside the parentheses, before the page number and without a comma between them, like this: (Rivera 26).



## Scaffolds and Modifications: Descriptions and Use

### For English learners (ELs) and other students needing additional support.

Some strategies referenced below direct the reader to additional information in the *Amplifications for English Language Learners* guide. We wish to clarify that all strategies below, whether they include this reference or not, may be used with any learner as appropriate.

### Reading

- **Annotating** – This basic but highly useful strategy is incorporated into nearly all Inquiry By Design reading tasks. During an initial reading, students are frequently asked to mark anything that seems interesting, confusing, or important. These annotations can form the basis for follow-up conversations during comprehension work, either with partners and small groups or as a whole class. After a first read, it is often helpful to have students reread and annotate with a purpose or question in mind: “Find and mark moments in the text that may help you answer this question.”
- **Charting (comprehension)** – After completing comprehension tasks, teachers are often directed to collect student thinking on a chart (paper or digital) visible to the whole class. This chart remains an access point to the text throughout the unit. Charting a retelling or other basic comprehension tasks is always an appropriate scaffold, whether or not the directions explicitly call for it.
- **Chunking** – Whenever a text is either especially long or especially complex, chunking is an excellent and highly adaptable scaffold. In the simplest approach, a teacher might pause at one or two moments in the first reading to give students a chance to annotate the section read, or even have students turn and talk with a neighbor for two minutes to check for understanding. Below are a few other variations of chunking work:
  - **Chunking and retelling** – After a complete reading of the text, ask students working in small groups to first break the text into discrete chunks (3-5 is often optimal) by looking for places the author changes ideas, focuses, settings, etc. In poetry, chunks can often (but not always) be separated by stanzas or end punctuation. After this, ask students to reread the chunks in their group and write a 1-2 sentence summary of each individual chunk. We do not recommend a jigsaw approach in which students are only responsible for understanding a small portion of the text.
    - » Students can also write down questions specific to each chunk during this work.
    - » After this, you might chart a whole-class retelling based on each group’s summaries.
  - **Chunking (interpretive)** – Even after comprehension work has been done, chunking can still be helpful. As students tackle interpretive work, they may find more success examining the text one chunk at a time for relevant ideas or evidence.
- **Critical vocabulary review** – When providing written instructions to students, especially groups that include English language learners, be sure to take time to both preview and review notes, handouts, copies of readings and rubrics etc. The content language as well as the language of instruction must be accessible; unpack key terms and instructions deliberately. Other considerations include the language of the genre, the language of assessment (e.g., terms in rubrics and checklists), and any domain-specific language in the readings. In addition, teachers must watch for and attend to figurative language and the use of idioms or idiomatic expressions. See the *Amplifications for English Language Learners* and the *Building Vocabulary* guide for more information.
- **Graphic representations** – As with chunking and retelling, this approach works well for long or complex texts. After a read-through, allow students time to review the text in small groups and generate a graphic representation of the story or ideas. Be loose in your requirements—students could create a simple flow chart or they could draw a six-panel cartoon sketch. Keep it simple, too: It is important that students remain focused on the text and its ideas, rather than on the artistry of their work.

- Modeling reading strategies – During a read aloud, you may model a particular reading comprehension strategy that fits your students' needs. At select moments during the reading, let students hear your thinking process as you, for example, work to determine the meaning of an unfamiliar word through context, or as you try to summarize a somewhat confusing passage. Frame your thinking as an example of what readers do in their minds as they monitor their own understanding of a text. Use selectively.
- Partnered/group reading – This strategy encompasses methods such as *whisper reading*, *ping-pong reading*, *choral reading*, and *echo reading*, all described in *Amplifications for English Language Learners*. In these methods, students read along (or read aloud, individually) with a partner, teacher, or group in a structure that scaffolds their work and maintains a safe environment. Note that these methods do not include “round-robin reading” or “popcorn reading,” which are methods we do not endorse.
- Read aloud, second read aloud – The first read aloud of a text is meant to provide all readers with a clear, sensible first experience with the text. Students almost always reread the text independently to complete the cycles of work. However, in some cases you may wish to provide a second read aloud, emphasizing that the first read is just a chance to listen for the general plot or ideas, and the second reading presents an opportunity to focus and annotate more deliberately. You may choose to have students share some of their initial observations, questions, or notes after the first read so students can listen for these details in the second read. This is especially useful with poetry and with particularly dense texts.
- Search and study – The search and study, typically introduced in *Reading and Writing About Informational and Literary Nonfiction*, is an excellent tool when interacting with texts full of unfamiliar technical vocabulary or which otherwise include a lot of context-dependent ideas or references. Texts heavy in scientific or historical references are good choices for a search and study. Consult the above-mentioned unit for more detail, but essentially, the search and study process involves students rereading the text to identify difficult moments or ideas, planning how they will figure those moments out (by rereading, discussing with a partner, or looking up information), and providing time and resources for students to seek out the information they need. Afterward, students share what they learned with the class.
- Question charts – During and after a reading, encourage students to note moments they have questions about. After completing comprehension work, check whether students still have questions and gather them on a chart, where you can determine whether they are appropriate for a search and study, for discussing during the whole-class interpretive discussion, for a turn-and-talk, or simply a quick answer.

### **Speaking and Listening**

- Charting (discussion) – As with comprehension work, charting is a useful practice in any discussion. By jotting down students' ideas and text references, you keep the focus on their thinking and work, provide a helpful scaffold for the conversation and the writing afterward, and keep a running list of claims that students can develop or oppose.
- Course correction – If students begin developing ideas based on factually inaccurate information (not simply a different interpretation than your own) and other students have not already corrected course, push students back into the text with prompts like, “Many of you have been saying \_\_\_\_\_. Where do you see that in the text?” If students respond with continued and unlikely interpretations, you might prompt additional ideas by asking, “Are there any simpler explanations?”
- Discussion norms – Before assuming students cannot successfully carry on small- or whole-group discussion, be sure that norms and expectations have been made clear. As with many strategies, we recommend building a list of norms with student input. Quickly review these norms as you transition into any small- or whole-group activity.
- Discussion protocols – This broad category includes all manner of formal discussion structures, such as Socratic seminars and fishbowl discussions. A web search will reveal many more. Inquiry By Design always encourages teachers to work toward the goal of having

students lead natural, unstructured conversations about texts. However, whether because of a specific instructional goal or simply for occasional variety, you may wish to look up and try out different protocols. Our cautions here are simply that you be sure that the hard work of critical thinking and analysis is always the students' work to do, and that you remember that any protocol is meant to be a temporary scaffold on the path to a larger and different goal.

- Goal-setting and reflection – Using the class's established discussion norms or another source (such as the “Seven Norms of Collaboration,” easily found online), provide students a moment to review the expectations and identify a goal (for example, “I know I need to work on pausing after others speak so that they can finish their thinking before I jump in, so I will focus on that in the discussion today”). They should write this down, so that after the discussion they can reflect on how they met their goal. This practice is always appropriate and can lead to consistent improvement in discussions, in addition to providing insights into students' own view of their strengths and needs.
- Posing questions – While we typically recommend that teachers decrease their role in classroom discussion, allowing students to own as much of the thinking and the overall process as possible, sometimes students need additional questions to build momentum. Rather than directing these questions toward a predetermined response (as in, “Take a look at p. 15 and tell me what the narrator says about the topic there”), use questions that may help simply reframe the task or a part of the larger question or that identify gaps in the conversation that students may not have noticed. Some examples might include
  - “We've been talking a lot about the ending of the story, but is there anything else in the story that might help us think about this question?”
  - “Here are the ideas we've been discussing so far. Who can add to or push back on any of these?”
  - “Is there an alternative explanation? Is there any other way of seeing this?”
  - When pressing for more information or ideas, try questions like these:
    - » “Can you tell me more about that?”
    - » “What makes you think that?”
    - » “Where do you see that in the text?”
    - » “Does that make us wonder about anything else?”
    - » “What questions do you still have about the text/characters/topic?”
- Quick writes – In preparation for small- or whole-group discussion, ask students to take a few minutes (anywhere from 3-10 minutes, depending on how much information they are processing) to develop their thinking about the topic in question. Let them know that this is writing-to-think work, not something that will be scored for its grammar and punctuation. At the same time, be sure to emphasize the importance of this thinking: Writing forces us to commit our ideas into specific words and phrases in a logical order. Many times, we do not fully know what we think until we have to put it into words.
- Repetition and recasting – Rather than an occasional intervention, this should be a common practice in any classroom with English learners, so you will not see this intervention marked in the margins. Especially for ELs, repetition is key to augmenting comprehension when language is spoken. Retelling is an important way for ELs to recall, verbally capture, and communicate their comprehension. Syntax is developed; vocabulary is practiced; and structures are made visible by the student. Recasting involves mirroring back and building upon what ELs have said using standard English (modeling pronunciation, standard grammar, oral expression, and adding academic vocabulary etc.). This allows ELs to hear and affirm what they have stated, but also points them toward higher levels of proficiency. See *Amplifications for English Language Learners* for examples and more information.
- Return to text – Sometimes when a discussion has lost its way, students need a moment to review the text and any annotations they have made. Prompt students to take 1-3 minutes to review the text with the topic in mind, looking for moments that may either build on ideas already discussed, or introduce new ideas into the conversation.

- Sentence stems/frames – While there are some lists included in our units and countless sentence stem lists to be found online, you may instead wish simply to generate a list of ideas from the students themselves. “What kinds of phrases might be helpful for us when we want to know more about somebody’s idea? What about when we disagree with them? Or when we want to add new information to the discussion?” Encourage students to rely on these less and less over time as natural conversation becomes more productive.
- Strategic pairing – English language learners need structured opportunities to interact with language in purposeful ways. Verbalization is an important part of language learning, and the recurring work in pairs, trios, and small groups allows the creation of intentional interactions for ELs. There are many ways to group ELs, and language proficiency levels are a crucial consideration. The recommended grouping will depend on both the content and language demands of the task. The goal is to improve access, engagement, and, ultimately, achievement. Some of the ways ELs can be grouped include
  - » Pairing ELs with a student of higher English-language proficiency.
  - » Pairing ELs with another EL who shares the same home language, so they may converse and process linguistically first in their native language, then in English.
  - » Pairing ELs with a non-EL peer.
  - » Pairing ELs with a strong ELA anchor partner.
  - » Grouping Beginning (Emerging) ELs.
  - » Grouping Beginning (Emerging) and Intermediate (Expanding) ELs.
  - » Grouping Advanced (Bridging) with advanced ELA students.
  - » Grouping Advanced (Bridging) ELs with a lower English-proficiency level student.
  - » No Grouping – Expecting Advanced (Bridging) ELs to complete the task at a level comparable to English proficient peers.

See *Amplifications for English Language Learners* for more information on strategic pairing.

- Turn and talk – When a discussion has faltered completely and the silences are not only frequent but long and unproductive, give students a moment to turn and talk with a neighbor. They might share their ideas about the question, share additional questions they have about the text or topic, or think of additional information that can be brought back to the whole group. After about two minutes, reconvene as a whole group to unpack students’ thinking and set a new course for the discussion.

## Writing

- Checklists for writing – Inquiry By Design’s *Rubrics for Writing* guide includes a variety of student checklists appropriate for different genres of writing. Whether or not their use is indicated specifically in the teacher manual and whether or not you decide to use the rubric itself, the checklists are always appropriate tools when students are writing in one of the indicated genres.
- Error journal – See *Constructing an Error Journal* for detailed information. When student writing shows a need for improved grammar and punctuation, be sure your class is engaged in regular opportunities to edit and revise their work, to seek out and understand writing mistakes (rather than simply making a teacher’s recommended corrections), and to track their ongoing errors for future reference and self-editing.
- Fluency practice – See *Developing Fluency in Writing* for more detailed information. This is not a one-time intervention but an ongoing practice. Essentially, regular low-stakes writing practice will help students become more detailed and fluent writers, which is a prerequisite for successful writing within particular genres. If student writing is frequently too brief and undeveloped, focus on implementing the work outlined in *Developing Fluency in Writing* (or similar work).

- Minimalist graphic organizers – Be extremely cautious about using graphic organizers or writing frames that do the thinking and planning work for students. If the organizer incorporates mandatory sentence starters and requires specific amounts and types of sentences (“Text evidence #1; Explanation #1; Text evidence #2; Explanation #2; etc.), it is likely to lead to extremely formulaic writing. More concerning, it is also likely to focus students’ attention on filling out a form rather than on engaging earnestly with the text and ideas, and the resulting writing will tell you less about their actual writing needs and more about their ability to “fill in the blanks.” When necessary, seek out organizers that help develop student thinking (like Venn diagrams) or that remind students of the expectations but provide a great deal of freedom and choice in how to meet them.
- Modeling – For detailed information and lesson plans on modeling specific writing strategies, see the introduction and Session 1-A of each of the guides for genre writing found in *Book 2: Form*. Modeling and the use of student exemplars (below) function on the understanding that telling students what to do can never be as effective as showing them. When introducing a new skill or expectation (for example, the use of counterclaims or the proper introduction of quoted text), use a display the whole class can see to model how this is done. Walk students clearly through your own thinking and the choices you make as you execute this skill. If it makes sense, follow your own modeling by creating another example with class input, then having students practice on their own (the I Do/We Do/You Do format). Modeling also plays an important role for English learners, who need to see and hear concrete information around expectations of a task. It is important to launch ELs into the process in a way they can understand, depending upon proficiency level. It is important for teachers to use meta-modeling, in order to make their thinking visible as they model or share. See *Amplifications for English Language Learners* for examples and more information.
- Peer review and feedback – For detailed information and lesson plans for peer review and feedback, see sessions 3-A and 3-B of each of the guides for genre writing found in *Book 2: Form*. Students benefit from having a second reader of their work, teachers benefit from improved drafts, and the classroom culture benefits from everyone’s increased exposure to student writing and a wider audience for each task.
- Quick writes – See above note under “Speaking and Listening.” This same low-stakes, writing-to-think work can be used prior to drafting a paper. If desired, students can use these quick writes to have a short conversation with a peer about their central ideas and the support for them. Also, if students completed a quick write prior to a whole-class discussion, you may ask them to return to the quick write after the discussion to add new ideas or alternative claims in preparation for writing.
- Sentence frames (writing) - Each formal genre contains its own language (e.g., argumentative versus informational) and is yet another linguistic layer all students, particularly English learners, must negotiate. Often, ELs have a clear idea mentally before they begin writing, but need a structure provided as a way to launch. The use of sentence frames, sentence stems, and paragraph frames are one way to provide concrete support. For example, in the genre of argument, teachers can offer ELs sentence frames to scaffold their use of academic English language in writing claims and counterclaims. See *Amplifications for English Language Learners* for more information.
- Student exemplars – For detailed information and lesson plans for the effective use of student exemplars, see the introduction and session 1-B each of the guides for genre writing found in *Book 2: Form*. When you would like students to see many possible options in how to execute a skill, or when you would like them to develop a clearer sense of quality in that skill, select a set of student papers or examples that demonstrate it. Ask students to review the paper(s), identify the moments that apply, and reflect on their traits and quality. After students have completed this work, chart observations and learnings as a class so students can put these ideas to work in their own writing.