

English Language Arts

Grade 8

Days 1 & 2

Genre: Realistic Fiction

Task: Reading realistic fiction.

Day 1 Directions:

Choose texts to read from the following short stories:

- “Let it Go” by Ebony Harry (student author)
http://www.merlynspen.org/stuff/contentmgr/files/88003b704cbacc11ca8ebb0f68d3d87e/read/let_go.pdf
- “Patella (Alias Knee-cap)” by Joe Hasley (student author)
<http://www.merlynspen.org/stuff/contentmgr/files/af65ac2d4d2e07246ea41b0e3b3cd4de/read/6.3.ss.5.pdf>
- “Purple Dots” by Hillary Smith (student author)
<http://www.merlynspen.org/stuff/contentmgr/files/8abe1957c1b8cc03176be03d1039661f/read/ann.1.ss.10.pdf>

After you have finished each story, write a short response that assesses how well the author crafted the story. Consider how well the author develops the characters, paces the story, uses language to engage the reader, or represents characters in a realistic way. Cite evidence from the text to support your assessment.

Day 2 Directions:

Choose an additional text to read from the following short stories:

- “Charlie” by Shirley Jackson
http://www.loa.org/images/pdf/Jackson_Charles.pdf
- “Fish Summer” by Michael Lim (student author)
<http://www.merlynspen.org/stuff/contentmgr/files/e0d8c2ef2004382f38b95ccde7ad912e/read/1.1.ss.1.pdf>
 - For an audio recording of this story:
http://www.merlynspen.org/stuff/contentmgr/files/e0d8c2ef2004382f38b95ccde7ad912e/audio/fish_summer.mp3

*These web sites are not controlled or approved by the NYC Department of Education

While you read:

- As you read each story, pay close attention to the characters’ words, thoughts, and actions. Think about how particular details reveal important information about the characters, such as their traits, beliefs, and perspectives as well as how characters change throughout a story.
- Also pay close attention to the author’s specific word choice and think about how it influences the tone of the story. For example, is the tone humorous, sarcastic, serious, etc.?
- For each story you read, be sure you can identify its theme. Think about how the author develops this theme through the characters, setting, plot and other story elements.

Days 3 & 4

Genre: Realistic Fiction

Task: Write a short story.

Day 3 Directions:

Write a short story about a character close to your age. Today, brainstorm, make a plot diagram, and draft your story.

While you write:

- Realistic fiction stories are imagined experiences, but they could happen in the real world.
- To generate ideas for your piece, brainstorm a list of challenges or conflicts someone your age might face. You might consider focusing on challenges related to school.
- Choose one conflict and create a plan for your story. Be sure your conflict is manageable for a short text. You may choose to organize the events by using a story map or storyboard. You can also refer to the stories provided for Day 1 as models for how to structure your short story. As you plan, think about how you will create scenes that build tension in your story, including:
 - Introducing your main character and what he/she wants
 - Revealing the conflict by having the character face a bit of trouble
 - Building the tension as the character encounters a little more trouble
 - Writing a climax where the character faces really big trouble and either gets his/her want fulfilled or not
 - Ending the story with a resolution that explains how the events impact the character's life
- As you write, be sure to use dialogue, description, reflection and action to develop the story.

Day 4 Directions:

Revise & Finalize

Days 5 & 6

Genre: Editorial

Task: Read two editorials and write a reflection.

Directions:

1. Choose one of the following topics and read both editorials.

High School Wake Up

- <http://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2014/08/27/high-school-start-times-teenagers-sleep-editorials-debates/14708625/>
- <http://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2014/08/27/high-school-start-times-fairfax-county-school-board-editorials-debates/14708879/>

Citizen Exams for Students

- <http://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2015/02/08/citizenship-civics-social-studies-editorials-debates/23088621/>
- <http://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2015/02/08/civics-testing-citizenship-arizona-north-dakota-editorials-debates/23088767/>

Paying College Athletes

- <http://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2015/01/13/ezekiel-elliott-cardale-jones-college-ncaa-steve-siebold-editorials-debates/21719499/>
- <http://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2015/01/13/college-football-national-championship-ohio-state-oregon-editorials-debates/21719363/>

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While you read:

- Editorials try to convince readers to think a particular way about an issue. As you read an editorial, identify the author's position or opinion on an issue. Pay close attention to the reasons provided as well as the specific evidence used to support the author's claims.
- As you read, jot down any questions you have. These questions can be based on parts you find confusing, parts you want to know more about, or parts where you challenge the author's argument.
- As you read, identify or mark parts of the text that are particularly effective. This could include where the author gives strong reasoning, includes relevant and convincing evidence, responds well to conflicting viewpoints, or skillfully uses language.

After you read:

- After you have finished reading the two editorials, write a short response that assesses how well each author presents an argument. Consider whether the reasons are sound or logical, whether the evidence is relevant, sufficient and credible and how well the author responds to opposing viewpoints. Explain which editorial presents the stronger argument.

Days 7 & 8

Genre: Editorial

Task: Write an editorial.

Day 7 Directions:

Write an editorial about a policy with which you strongly agree or strongly disagree. Today research, brainstorm, and draft your editorial.

While you write:

- The purpose of an editorial is to convince readers that your viewpoint on an issue is the right one. Therefore you will need to take a clear side on an issue.
- Brainstorm a list of policies that you feel strongly about. You should list policies you think are great ideas as well as ones that are terrible ideas. Start with school policies (or rules), then think about policies or laws on the city, state, or national level.
- Choose a policy and list reasons why you agree or disagree with that policy. Next, brainstorm examples that support each of your reasons. You may want to conduct research to find facts, examples and quotations from reliable sources to include in your editorial.
- You will also need to acknowledge and refute opposing claims. Think about one or two reasons why people might disagree with your viewpoint and then try to disprove their reasoning. In an editorial this might sound like: *Some people think . . . , however, . . .*
- Be sure to include an introduction that sparks a reader's interest and clearly states your claim and a conclusion that ties the editorial together and leaves the reader with something to think about. You can refer to the editorials provided for Day 1 as models for how to structure your writing.

Day 8 Directions:

Revise & Finalize



Days 9 & 10

Independent Reading

Directions:

Read a book of your choosing. Write the title and author below.

** A note to parents and guardians: Talk with your children about the books they are reading.*

If you would like an e-book, go to <https://www.nypl.org/books-music-movies/ebookcentral>

Title: _____

Author: _____

After Reading:

Read the next chapter in the book of your choice and identify one or two key ideas that you find especially interesting and important. Write specific details from the text that give information about the key ideas.

Complete the Key Ideas chart:

Important and interesting ideas	Specific details from the text

Writing: Using the information you recorded in your Key Ideas chart, write a page to analyze why one or more key ideas you identified are especially interesting and important. Include specific details from the text that support your analysis.