



## ELA Design Framework

Program Architecture and Instructional Design Guide, Grades 6-8

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# Introduction

The **ELA Design Framework** is the architectural blueprint for Newsela *Threads & Themes* for California, Grades 6–8 Basic ELA. It describes how the program is structured—from year-long scope and sequence to individual lesson components—and explains the design decisions that ensure alignment with the CA CCSS for ELA and the CA ELA/ELD Framework.

The framework uses an Integrated ELD approach: language development supports for Multilingual Learners are embedded within every ELA lesson through scaffolding, vocabulary instruction, sentence frames, and collaborative discussion protocols. This framework supports the ELA design of both Program 1 and Program 2 of the 2026 California ELA/ELD Follow-Up Adoption. The instructional design described within is grounded in the California ELA/ELD Framework (California Department of Education, 2014) and reflects the evidence-based literacy research codified in California’s 2026 ELA/ELD Instructional Materials Guidance (CDE, 2025).

## For Reviewers

The Navigation Guide (available at Course Page > Reviewer Resources) provides a complete orientation to the digital platform, including how to locate lessons, units, teacher edition annotations, student materials, and assessment tools. It also maps each program resource to its location on the platform and describes the relationship between course-level resources (CR), unit-level resources (UR), and lesson-level materials. Reviewers are encouraged to read the Navigation Guide before beginning their review.

## Section Navigation

Section	Focus
1. Program Architecture	180-day structure, unit types, pacing
2. Unit Structure & Design	Unit arcs, lesson types, scope and sequence
3. Integrated ELD Within ELA	I-ELD architecture, language supports embedded in ELA
4. Reading & Text Complexity	Anchor texts, text sets, foundational skills, independent reading
5. Writing Instruction	Three writing types, writing vertical alignment, writing process, research
6. Academic Language & Vocabulary	Vocabulary instruction, spelling, word study

7. <b>Speaking, Listening &amp; Discussion</b>	Collaborative conversations, discussion protocols
8. <b>Assessment Architecture</b>	Performance tasks, formative assessment, MTSS
9. <b>Teacher Edition &amp; Instructional Planning</b>	Annotations, pacing, technology, components

## Core Design Principles

- 1. Content-first, standards-aligned design.** The program begins with the CA CCSS for ELA as the primary organizing framework. The five key themes of the CA ELA/ELD Framework—Meaning Making, Language Development, Effective Expression, Content Knowledge, and Foundational Skills—organize and appear throughout instruction. This approach ensures that even programs addressing subsets of the CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy incorporate all five themes to the fullest extent possible.
- 2. Knowledge-building through volume of reading.** Each unit is grounded in a knowledge-building topic explored through long-form anchor texts and short-form supporting texts, reflecting research that integrated literacy and content-area instruction produces measurable gains in vocabulary, background knowledge, and comprehension (Hwang, Cabell, & Joyner, 2021; Smith et al., 2021). Students read four full-length, grade-level texts per year. Texts are high quality, span genres and cultures, and include variation within linguistic groups. Reading selections balance literary and informational texts appropriate to each grade level. Texts include shorter, challenging texts for regular close reading and rereading.
- 3. Integrated language development for all learners.** Language supports for Multilingual Learners (MLs) are embedded in every ELA lesson—not delivered in a separate instructional block. Vocabulary instruction, including cognate awareness that leverages students’ home-language knowledge, sentence frames, collaborative discussion protocols, and scaffolded writing activities, ensures that Multilingual Learners access grade-level content while developing academic English. This integrated approach reflects the CA ELA/ELD Framework’s vision of language development as inseparable from content learning, and it operationalizes the IES Practice Guide recommendations for teaching academic content and literacy to English learners (Baker et al., 2014; Goldenberg, 2020).
- 4. Foundational skills support at middle school.** While explicit instruction in foundational reading skills is typically primarily a focus of the K–5 classroom, many middle school students have not mastered these skills and require continued, research-based support. *Threads & Themes* provides foundational skills instruction through Targeted Instruction Huddles within Flex Days, morphological analysis routines (Carlisle, 2010; Graham & Santangelo, 2014), fluency-building activities (Burns, 2024), and diagnostic tools that identify students who need intervention. Literacy Labs serve as an intentional bridge from elementary to secondary literacy instruction, building *all* students’ independent command of Tier 2 academic vocabulary so that they retain and transfer this language across content areas, grade levels, and increasingly complex texts throughout middle school and beyond. Foundational skills instruction aligns with MTSS Tier 1 core instruction and includes progress monitoring.

5. **A repeating, predictable unit structure.** Every unit follows the same arc: Spark, Investigation 1, Flex, Investigation 2, Flex, Showcase, Flex. Seven lesson types provide instructional variety while maintaining consistent routines. Assessment is embedded at every level: Checks for Understanding (daily formative), Checkpoints (end-of-investigation), and Performance Tasks (summative).
6. **Culturally sustaining text selection and linguistic diversity as instructional assets.** *Threads & Themes* treats linguistic and cultural diversity as resources that strengthen learning—not as deficits to remediate (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González, 1992; Paris & Alim, 2017). Text selection centers authors and perspectives from African American, Latino/a/x, Asian American, Indigenous, and immigrant communities as integral to the literary canon, not supplementary to it. Instruction affirms the linguistic knowledge students bring, including African American English, home languages, and translingual repertoires. Contrastive analysis—placing home language patterns alongside academic English—replaces deficit-based correction, building metalinguistic awareness while honoring identity (LeMoine, 1999; Rickford, 1999). This commitment is not a separate strand; it is embedded in text selection, vocabulary instruction, discussion protocols, and the assessment of language development across all units and grade levels.
7. **High expectations for all students, with scaffolds that protect rigor.** *Threads & Themes* is designed on the conviction that every student—including multilingual learners, students with disabilities, students reading below grade level, and students who use African American English or other language varieties—can engage meaningfully with grade-level texts, tasks, and language demands. Scaffolds throughout the program are designed to provide access to grade-level rigor, not to reduce it, and are faded based on formative evidence of student readiness. Skills and concepts progress in complexity across Grades 6–8 and prepare students for the increasingly sophisticated literacy demands of high school and beyond.

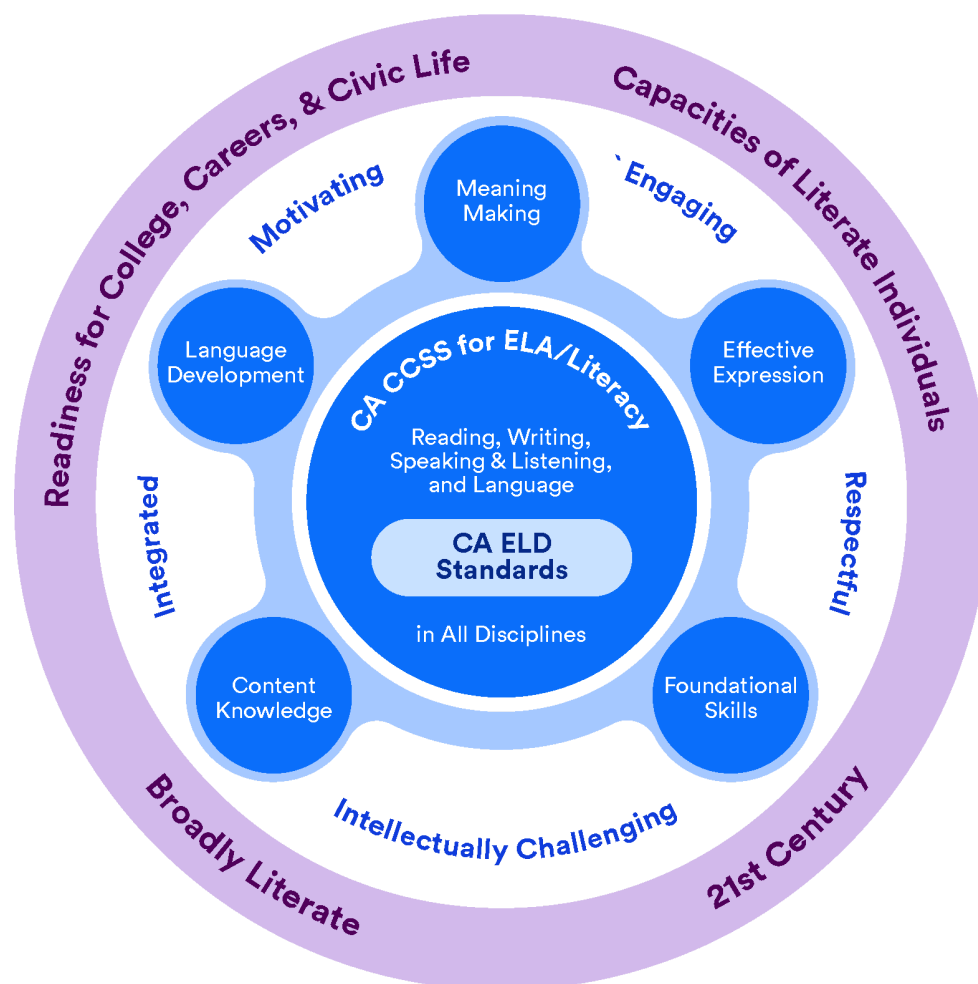
#### Reviewer Note

You may also see the Core Design Principles section referenced as “Core Pedagogical Pillars” in the criteria maps.

## Five Themes of the CA ELA/ELD Framework

All five CA Framework themes are systematically embedded in the program’s architecture to ensure that all learners achieve grade-level success.

- **Meaning Making:** Students construct understanding of texts and topics through close reading, discussion, and collaboration.
- **Language Development:** Vocabulary, syntax, discourse, and language conventions are taught explicitly and reinforced throughout instruction.
- **Effective Expression:** Students communicate ideas through writing, speaking, and artistic representation.
- **Content Knowledge:** Students build deep knowledge of grade-level topics through sustained reading and research.
- **Foundational Skills:** In middle school, students who lack fluency, phonics, or word recognition receive targeted, systematic support.



## Section 1: Program Architecture

### 180-Day Design

The program spans 180 instructional days, organized into four units per grade level. Each unit runs approximately 45 days, with 180-day pacing guides for grades 6, 7, and 8 aligned to the CA CCSS for ELA.

### Units by Topic

Grade	Contemporary Anchor	Science Texts	Social Studies Texts	Canonical Anchor
<b>Grade 6</b> Theme: <i>Self &amp; Story</i>	<b><i>Look Both Ways</i></b> by Jason Reynolds	<b><i>Hidden Figures (Young Readers' Edition)</i></b> by Margot Lee Shetterly	<b><i>A Single Shard</i></b> by Linda Sue Park	<b><i>The Lightning Thief (Percy Jackson and the Olympians, Book 1)</i></b> by Rick Riordan
<b>Grade 7</b> Theme: <i>Belonging &amp; Witness</i>	<b><i>The Outsiders</i></b> by S. E. Hinton	<b><i>Red, White, and Whole</i></b> by Rajani LaRocca	<b><i>Seen and Unseen</i></b> by Elizabeth Partridge & Lauren Tamaki	<b><i>A Raisin in the Sun</i></b> by Lorraine Hansberry
<b>Grade 8</b> Theme: <i>Systems &amp; Stewardship</i>	<b><i>March: Book One</i></b> by John Lewis, Andrew Aydin & Nate Powell	<b><i>The Last Cuentista</i></b> by Donna Barba Higuera	<b><i>Braiding Sweetgrass (Young Readers' Edition)</i></b> by Robin Wall Kimmerer	<b><i>Animal Farm</i></b> by George Orwell

### Alignment with CA CCSS for ELA

Each grade's scope and sequence maps all applicable CA CCSS for ELA standards (Reading, Writing, Speaking/Listening, Language) across the 180 days. Standards are addressed at least twice per unit. Foundational skills standards are addressed through Literacy Lab instruction and diagnostic monitoring at the middle school level.

The teacher edition includes a detailed standards map indicating which standards are introduced, practiced, and mastered in each lesson, unit, and grade band. This ensures no standard is skipped and provides clear guidance for intervention and acceleration.

### Standards Coverage at a Glance

The Standards Alignment Maps (Course Page › Reviewer Resources) in *Threads & Themes* document the specific lessons, units, and assessments in which each CA CCSS for ELA standard is introduced, practiced, and assessed.

Anchor reading standards (RL.1–4, RI.1–2, RI.4) appear across all three grades with intentional progression: Grade 6 emphasizes citing evidence and determining central ideas; Grade 7 shifts to analyzing word choice, point of view, and text structure; Grade 8 requires synthesis across texts,

evaluation of argument, and analysis of how authors engage with real-world systems. Writing standards spiral similarly, with argument (W.1) and explanatory (W.2) writing appearing in every grade, increasing in complexity from claim-and-evidence (Grade 6) to nuanced, multi-source argument (Grade 8).

Each lesson carries its own set of supporting standards selected to match the lesson's content and objectives. In addition to those lesson-specific supporting standards, certain standards are included as supporting standards in every instance of a given lesson type. For example, W.10 is a supporting standard in every Writing lesson. SL.6 is a supporting standard in every Academic Discussion and Presentation lesson. RL.10 is included as a supporting standard in Reading lessons when the text is a short story, drama, or poem. RI.10 is included as a supporting standard in Reading lessons that feature informational or literary nonfiction texts. L.6 is included as a supporting standard in Writing lessons that contain a Language Study component and in Performance Task lessons focused on writing whose focus standards include W.1.c, W.2.d, or W.3.d. These standards appear alongside any other supporting standards applicable to the individual lesson. All supporting-standard designations are reflected in the Standards Alignment Maps and in individual lesson headers in the teacher edition.

#### ***Threads & Themes Instruction Reflects Current Research***

All instructional routines, scaffolding strategies, and assessment protocols are grounded in recent, peer-reviewed research in reading instruction, language development, and literacy across grade levels.

## Section 2: Unit Structure & Design

### The Unit Arc

#### The Spark–Investigation–Showcase Arc

Every unit follows a three-phase pedagogical arc—Spark, Investigation, Showcase—designed to move students from engagement through guided analysis to independent demonstration of learning.

- **Spark (3–4 days)** builds schema and motivation. Students encounter the unit’s essential question through visual texts, video, discussion, and vocabulary preview. The Spark creates intellectual need—a reason to read—before the anchor text is introduced.
- **Investigation (two cycles of 10–12 days each, separated by Flex Days)** develops analytical skills through sustained engagement with anchor and supporting texts. Students read closely, discuss collaboratively, and practice the writing and language skills they will need for the culminating task. The two-investigation structure allows the first cycle to establish comprehension and the second to deepen analysis and advance writing.
- **Showcase (5–7 days)** requires students to demonstrate learning independently through a Performance Task—an extended writing piece, presentation, or research project that synthesizes the unit’s reading, writing, and language objectives. Showcase is not a test; it is a culminating act of meaning-making.

Flex Days provide dedicated time for differentiated small-group instruction, extension, fluency practice, and additional foundational skills support. Flex Days are driven by formative assessment data: teachers use Checks for Understanding, Look-Fors, and Confidence Continuum results to assign students to targeted groups

(see Section 8: Assessment Architecture of this document as well as the Differentiation Playbook for more detailed Flex Day guidance).

The Spark–Investigation–Showcase Arc reflects a gradual release of responsibility: teachers model and guide during Spark and early Investigation, students practice with increasing independence throughout the Investigation, and students apply learning autonomously during the Showcase (Fisher & Frey, 2014). The predictable structure reduces cognitive load for both teachers and students while maintaining instructional variety through seven different lesson types within each phase.

Step	Duration	Purpose
1. Spark	3–4 days	Build background knowledge; activate schema; introduce vocabulary and unit topic through visual texts, video, and discussion
2a. Investigation 1	10–12 days	Read and analyze anchor or primary text; develop reading strategies; identify key ideas and details; introduce writing task
2b. Assessment and Flex Days	3–4 days	Small-group instruction, Targeted Instruction Huddles, reteaching, extension, fluency practice, and additional foundational skills support

3a. Investigation 2	10–12 days	Read and analyze the second text or text set; deepen comprehension and analysis; advance writing with revision and feedback
3b. Assessment and Flex Days	3–4 days	Small-group instruction, Targeted Instruction Huddles, reteaching, extension, fluency practice, and additional foundational skills support
4. Showcase	5–7 days	Revise final writing; prepare for performance task or presentation; self-assess and celebrate learning

## Using Flex Days

Each unit includes Flex Days at predictable points in the arc, and the program provides example Flex Day plans teachers can implement directly. These examples model the structure, pacing, and Huddle moves a productive Flex Day uses; they are not, however, the substance of every Flex Day a teacher will run.

The defining characteristic of a Flex Day is that its content is determined by the students in the room -- enabling just-in-time scaffolding and responsive instruction that maintains grade-level rigor. Teachers use the formative data they have collected during the preceding Investigation—Checks for Understanding, Confidence Continuum responses, Look-Fors, observations during discussion and writing, and end-of-Investigation Checkpoint results—to identify which students need reteaching, which are ready for extension, and what specific skills or texts to revisit. The example Flex Days included in the program are starting points and reference designs; the real power of a Flex Day happens when the teacher selects, adapts, or designs Huddles in response to that data.

Each unit’s pacing guide allocates up to eight Flex Days, divided between two types. Three to six are *End-of-Arc Flex Days*—planned pause points placed after Investigation 1, after Investigation 2, and after the Showcase, where teachers consolidate or revisit content covered in the preceding arc. The remaining two or more are *Responsive Flex Days*—fully discretionary days teachers can drop into the middle of an investigation when emerging formative data warrants just-in-time instruction rather than waiting for the next planned pause point.

On any given Flex Day, teachers run up to three Targeted Instruction Huddles in either whole-class or small-group format. The five Huddle types map directly to the five key themes of the CA ELA/ELD Framework: a Meaning Making Huddle (close-text comprehension and metacognitive strategies), a Language Development Huddle (vocabulary, syntax, and metalanguage), an Effective Expression Huddle (writing craft, discourse, and oral expression), a Content Knowledge Huddle (knowledge previewing and extension for upcoming texts), and a Foundational Skills Huddle (phonological awareness, decoding, word recognition, and fluency). Students not currently in a Huddle engage in structured Student Activities—Catch Up Day, Independent Reading, or a Knowledge Boost extension—that protect the small-group instructional time.

Two constraints shape Flex Day design. First, Huddles are Tier 1 supports; they do not replace Designated ELD instruction (in Program 2) or Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions, which students continue to receive through the appropriate channels. Second, Huddle groupings are dynamic and responsive to current formative data—they are not static ability groups, and a student’s membership in a Huddle one week does not impact their placement during the next one.

In practice, a teacher might:

- run a provided Flex Day plan as written when student data aligns with the example’s focus,
- swap a Huddle from one example Flex Day into another when the data points to a different need, or
- use the structure of an example Flex Day as a template, replacing the content with skill-specific or text-specific work focused on their students’ specific needs at that time.

Whatever path a teacher takes, the program intends that no Flex Day is wasted on instruction that students don’t currently need. Detailed guidance on Flex Day grouping decisions, Huddle selection, and the formative-data routines that drive both is provided in the Differentiation Playbook (Course Page › Reviewer Resources).

## Unit Types

Two unit types provide instructional variety:

**Core Units:** Focused on a single anchor text (novel, play, poetry collection, or narrative nonfiction) or a coordinated pair of primary texts. Approximately 3 units per year.

**Research Units:** Focused on a knowledge-building topic with a curated text set. Students synthesize information from multiple sources and produce extended research-based writing (essay, research report, or argument). Approximately 1 unit per year.

## Seven Lesson Types

Lesson Type	Duration	Structure	Primary Skills
<b>Spark</b>	45 min	Visual anchor; discussion; schema activation; vocabulary preview	Comprehension, discussion, vocabulary
<b>Reading</b>	50 min	Read-aloud or independent reading; annotation; vocabulary support; discussion	Fluency, comprehension, analysis, vocabulary
<b>Writing</b>	50 min	Model or mentor text; guided practice; independent writing; peer feedback	Written expression, organization, conventions
<b>Academic Discussion</b>	45 min	Structured discussion protocol; sentence frames; partner and whole-group talk	Speaking, listening, argumentation, and collaborative communication
<b>Presentation</b>	45–50 min	Explicit instruction in presentation skills (organization, delivery, visual aids, audience awareness); modeled presentations and peer feedback; implemented primarily during Showcase arc with additional opportunities in Core Unit lessons	Speaking, listening, writing, oral expression, multimedia literacy

<b>Research</b>	50 min	Source evaluation; note-taking; synthesis; oral rehearsal before writing	Research, writing, synthesis, and academic integrity
<b>Flex Day</b>	30–50 min	Targeted instruction, reteaching, fluency, foundational skills, enrichment	Varies by group needs

## Lesson Structure

Phase	Typical Duration	Purpose
<b>1. Launch</b>	5 min	A brief opening task that activates prior knowledge and builds interest in the lesson's content. Students begin thinking, talking, or writing right away by connecting to previous learning, revisiting the unit's Essential Question, sharing thinking from a prior lesson's Look Back or homework, or making personal connections to the day's content objective. Low-stakes and high-engagement.
<b>2. Literacy Lab</b>	10 min	A targeted, high-impact instructional block that builds foundational literacy and language skills in the context of grade-level texts. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>In Reading Lessons</i>: Targeted work on vocabulary, morphology, language/syntax, and fluency, using a small set of replicable routines so students can wrestle with the complex language of the day's text.</li> <li>• <i>In Writing Lessons</i>: Explicit instruction in writing strategies through direct teaching, modeling with exemplar sentences and paragraphs, guided practice (often with mnemonic strategies like SRSD), and peer feedback strategies.</li> </ul>
<b>3. Learning in Action</b>	30 min	The core application block where students practice and apply the skills introduced in the Literacy Lab through text-based reading, writing, and discussion. Formats vary by lesson type and may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• close reading and whole-class discussion of the anchor text or text set,</li> <li>• a reading-writing connection (text-specific questions plus a brief written response),</li> <li>• guided practice of a new skill or routine,</li> <li>• extended reading,</li> <li>• recursive drafting, revision, and peer feedback,</li> <li>• or academic discussion protocols.</li> </ul>
<b>4. Look Back</b>	5 min	A short closing component that captures formative data and supports student reflection. Most days this is a brief Exit Ticket aligned to the lesson's content objective (e.g., a quick on-demand "mini write," a partner share of final thoughts, or a multiple-choice check). At least once every five

Phase	Typical Duration	Purpose
		lessons, the Look Back becomes a Reflection Pause where students reflect on their learning, goals, or class experience.

## Program Components

All program components, teacher materials, student materials, support resources, and digital tools are aligned to the CA CCSS for ELA and designed for ease of use. Each component includes overviews that clearly identify the ELA/ELD concepts addressed, and all digital learning resources connect explicitly to the standards they support.

### Student-Facing Programmatic Elements

The program integrates a set of recurring student-facing tools designed to build familiarity, reduce procedural overhead, and maximize time spent on intellectual work. These tools span every phase of the lesson arc:

- **Spark / Launch tools** (Gallery Walk Materials, Quick Write Prompts) activate prior knowledge and introduce unit themes.
- **Literacy Lab tools** (Personal Dictionary, multisensory vocabulary routines) build foundational vocabulary, morphological awareness, and phonological skills
- **Learning in Action tools** (Annotation Tools and Codes, Graphic Organizers, Academic Talk Stems, Sentence Frames, Peer Feedback Routines, Fluency Practice Passages) support close reading, structured discussion, and writing across all lesson types.
- **Look Back tools** (Reflection, 3–2–1 Summary, Pulse Checks) develop metacognition and generate formative data for instructional planning.

Each tool appears repeatedly across lessons and units so that students internalize routines and teachers can focus on content. Detailed implementation guidance—including step-by-step procedures, facilitation tips, differentiation suggestions, and multisensory fidelity checklists—is included in the ELA Routines Guide, while the Navigation Guide maps each element to its digital location (both available at Course Page > Reviewer Resources).

## Section 3: Integrated ELD Within ELA

This section describes Integrated ELD, which applies to both programs; Designated ELD (Program 2 only) is addressed in the companion **Designated ELD Design Framework**.

### How Integrated ELD Works in Every Lesson

Every ELA lesson in *Threads & Themes* includes Integrated ELD (I-ELD) supports tied directly to the activity students are doing. Each I-ELD support appears in a consistent three-part structure – Purpose, Say / Ask, and Watch For / Support If Needed – so teachers always know where to look and what to expect. In the digital lesson, these supports appear in an I-ELD dropdown placed immediately beneath the activity they support; in the print Teacher Edition, the same three-part block appears inline alongside the activity.

The three parts work together to make language development actionable in the moment:

- **Purpose** names the language goal for the activity, lists the targeted Language Focus (vocabulary, syntax, discourse moves, or register),
- **Say / Ask** gives the teacher modeled language and a graduated set of sentence frames students can use to engage with the task. In Academic Discussion and Presentation lessons, where students are producing extended academic language, this section additionally breaks the frames out by ELD proficiency level (Emerging, Expanding, Bridging) so the teacher can match the frame to the learner.
- **Watch For / Support If Needed** lists observable indicators of student progress and "if / then" scaffolds the teacher can use in the moment when a student gets stuck. In Academic Discussion and Presentation lessons, these indicators are also tiered by proficiency level so the teacher knows what to look for at each stage of language development. Where relevant, supports invite translanguaging so students can think through ideas in a shared home language before producing English.

The CA ELD proficiency levels are surfaced for every ELA lesson in the lesson's standards field, where ELD standards are listed in all three tiers (e.g., ELD.PI.7.6a.Em, ELD.PI.7.6a.Ex, ELD.PI.7.6a.Br), so teachers can see at a glance which standards the lesson advances for multilingual learners at each level.

### I-ELD Supports by ELA Lesson Type

Lesson Type	I-ELD Supports Embedded	How Language Development Happens
<b>Spark</b>	Visual vocabulary preview with cognate identification; schema activation in any language; multilingual entry points	Students build background knowledge while encountering academic vocabulary in context
<b>Reading</b>	Targeted vocabulary and sentence-structure focus tied to the text; chunking and close-reading moves; graduated sentence frames for	Language analysis occurs naturally during text engagement; morphological analysis builds word knowledge

	explaining text; translanguaging invited.	
<b>Writing</b>	Graduated sentence frames for evidence integration, transitions, and academic tone; modeled sentences; observable indicators for cohesion and academic register	Students produce increasingly complex academic language through scaffolded writing practice
<b>Academic Discussion</b>	Discussion stems for evidence building, clarifying and respectful challenge broken out by Emerging / Expanding / Bridging; partner talk before whole group; translanguaging welcomed	Oral academic language develops through structured, repeated opportunities to speak about texts
<b>Presentation (Showcase)</b>	Sentence frames for oral delivery; vocabulary for formal register; peer feedback– broken out by Emerging / Expanding / rehearsal-focused indicators	Students develop formal oral academic language through rehearsal, structured feedback, and purposeful use of discipline-specific vocabulary in presentation contexts
<b>Research</b>	Source evaluation with language support; note-taking frames; oral rehearsal before writing	Academic language grows as students engage in disciplinary literacy practices
<b>Flex Day</b>	Targeted vocabulary huddles; fluency practice; language-focused small groups	Differentiated instruction targets specific language needs identified through formative assessment

## Section 4: Reading & Text Complexity

### Reading Progression Across Grades 6–8

This progression shows how reading skill development advances across Grades 6, 7, and 8 in Newsela *Threads & Themes*. Each table identifies a specific reading strand or standard, names the Grade 6 baseline, and describes how Grade 7 and Grade 8 build progressively from that foundation. The progression aligns with the CA CCSS Reading Standards for Literature (RL) and Reading Standards for Informational Text (RI) and reflects the cumulative skill development students bring with them as they enter high school ELA.

The progression complements the Three-Year Writing Progression in this same section by surfacing the reading skill arc that prepares students for grade 9–10 literary and informational reading work.

Progression is documented along three coordinated dimensions:

1. **Standards demand:** how the CA CCSS Reading anchors shift in cognitive load from G6 to G8;
2. **Text complexity:** quantitative (Lexile) and qualitative (structure, layers of meaning, language conventionality, knowledge demands) increases across the anchor texts and supporting text sets; and
3. **Scaffolding release:** Literacy Lab supports, evidence routines, and discussion protocols fade as students move from G6 to G8, so by Grade 8 students independently evaluate strength of evidence, compare structures across texts, and analyze allusion, allegory, and dramatic irony.

### Cross-Strand Reading Progression

The following table summarizes how each major reading strand advances across the three grades. Standards in parentheses identify the CA CCSS Reading anchors that develop in that strand.

Strand	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
Citing Evidence (RL/RI.6–8.1)	Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.	Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.	Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
Central Ideas and Themes (RL/RI.6–8.2)	Determine a theme or central idea and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary distinct from personal opinion.	Determine a theme or central idea and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary.	Determine a theme or central idea and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary.

Plot and Character Development (RL.6–8.3)	Describe how a particular story's or drama's plot unfolds in a series of episodes and how characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution.	Analyze how particular elements of a story or drama interact (e.g., how setting shapes the characters or plot).	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.
Ideas and Events in Informational Text (RI.6–8.3)	Analyze in detail how a key individual, event, or idea is introduced, illustrated, and elaborated in a text.	Analyze the interactions between individuals, events, and ideas in a text.	Analyze how a text makes connections among and distinctions between individuals, ideas, or events.
Word Choice and Vocabulary (RL/RI.6–8.4)	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of word choice on meaning and tone.	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of rhymes and other repetitions of sounds (e.g., alliteration) on a specific verse or stanza.	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.
Text Structure (RL/RI.6–8.5)	Analyze how a particular sentence, chapter, scene, or stanza fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of theme, setting, or plot.	Analyze how the form or structure of a drama or poem (e.g., soliloquy, sonnet) contributes to its meaning.	Compare and contrast the structure of two or more texts and analyze how the differing structure of each text contributes to its meaning and style.
Point of View and Purpose (RL/RI.6–8.6)	Explain how an author develops the point of view of the narrator or speaker in a text; determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text.	Analyze how an author develops and contrasts the points of view of different characters or narrators in a text; determine an author's point of view or purpose and analyze how the author distinguishes his or her position from that of others.	Analyze how differences in points of view of characters and the audience or reader create dramatic effects such as suspense or humor; determine an author's point of view and analyze how the author acknowledges and responds to

			conflicting evidence or viewpoints.
Integration Across Media and Texts (RL/RI.6–8.7–9)	Compare and contrast the experience of reading a text to listening to or viewing an audio, video, or live version; compare and contrast texts in different forms or genres.	Compare and contrast a written story, drama, or poem to its audio, filmed, staged, or multimedia version; trace and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text.	Analyze the extent to which a filmed or live production of a story or drama stays faithful to or departs from the text; delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is sound and the evidence is relevant and sufficient.
Range and Complexity of Texts (RL/RI.6–8.10)	By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, and informational texts at the high end of the grades 6–8 text complexity band, with scaffolding as needed.	By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, and informational texts at the high end of the grades 6–8 text complexity band, with scaffolding as needed.	By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, and informational texts at the high end of the grades 6–8 text complexity band proficiently, preparing students for grade 9–10 reading.

## Anchor Texts and Primary Reading Focus by Grade

The progression builds across grade levels through intentional anchor text selection. The table below names each anchor text and the primary reading work it develops at each grade.

Grade	Anchor Text	Primary Reading Standards Developed
G6, Unit 1	<i>Look Both Ways</i> (Jason Reynolds)	RL.6.3 character response and change; RL.6.6 narrator point of view across short stories
G6, Unit 2	<i>A Single Shard</i> (Linda Sue Park)	RL.6.1 evidence; RL.6.2 theme development across a sustained novel; RL.6.3 character development
G6, Unit 3	<i>Hidden Figures: Young Readers' Edition</i> (Margot Lee Shetterly)	RI.6.1 evidence in informational text; RI.6.2 central ideas; RI.6.3

		individuals and events; RI.6.9 comparing accounts
G6, Unit 4	<i>The Lightning Thief</i> (Rick Riordan); myth and adaptation text sets	RL.6.5 structure (myth structures, adaptation); RL.6.9 comparing forms across texts
G7, Unit 1	<i>The Outsiders</i> (S. E. Hinton)	RL.7.3 character and plot; RL.7.6 narrator point of view; RL.7.1 evidence across a sustained novel
G7, Unit 2	<i>Seen and Unseen</i> (Partridge and Tamaki)	RI.7.6 author's purpose in primary sources; RI.7.7 multimedia integration; RL.7.9 comparing literary and informational accounts of the same events
G7, Unit 3	<i>A Raisin in the Sun</i> (Lorraine Hansberry)	RL.7.3 drama character interaction; RL.7.4 dialogue and figurative language; RL.7.6 contrasting characters' points of view
G7, Unit 4	<i>Red, White, and Whole</i> (Rajani LaRocca); verse novel	RL.7.4 figurative language and imagery; RL.7.5 verse novel structure; RL.7.9 comparing across genres
G8, Unit 1	<i>March: Book One</i> (John Lewis et al.); civic-rights primary sources	RI.8.6 author's perspective; RI.8.7 evaluating advantages of different media; RI.8.9 comparing texts with conflicting information
G8, Unit 2	<i>Animal Farm</i> (George Orwell)	RL.8.2 theme development across allegory; RL.8.4 connotation, irony, allusion; RL.8.6 dramatic effects of point of view
G8, Unit 3	<i>Braiding Sweetgrass</i> (Robin Wall Kimmerer)	RI.8.3 connections and distinctions between ideas; RI.8.5 structure of paragraphs and sections; RI.8.6 author's perspective

G8, Unit 4	<i>The Last Cuentista</i> (Donna Barba Higuera)	RL.8.3 dialogue and incidents propelling action; RL.8.9 modern fiction drawing on myth
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## Key Ideas and Details: Cross-Grade Progression

Cite evidence, determine central ideas and themes, and analyze character/event development. These three standards (anchors .1, .2, .3) develop in tandem across G6–G8.

### Citing Evidence (RL/RI.X.1)

Grade 6 — Baseline	Grade 7 — Adds	Grade 8 — Adds
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly</li> <li>• Use evidence to support inferences drawn from the text</li> <li>• Cite from a single source or section of a longer text</li> <li>• Anchor: <i>A Single Shard</i> close reads for character motivation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cite several pieces of textual evidence rather than a single piece</li> <li>• Use evidence across longer texts and multiple sources</li> <li>• Distinguish stronger from weaker evidence for a given claim</li> <li>• Anchor: <i>The Outsiders</i> evidence-tracking across the novel; <i>Seen and Unseen</i> primary sources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis</li> <li>• Evaluate the relative strength of competing evidence</li> <li>• Integrate evidence to build sustained analytical claims</li> <li>• Anchor: <i>March: Book One</i> civil rights primary sources; <i>Animal Farm</i> allegorical evidence</li> </ul>

### Central Ideas and Themes (RL/RI.X.2)

Grade 6 — Baseline	Grade 7 — Adds	Grade 8 — Adds
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determine a theme or central idea</li> <li>• Identify how a theme is conveyed through particular details</li> <li>• Provide a summary distinct from personal opinions or judgments</li> <li>• Anchor: <i>A Single Shard</i> theme of perseverance; <i>Hidden Figures</i> central idea of hidden contribution</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyze how a theme or central idea develops over the course of the text</li> <li>• Provide an objective summary that traces development, not just identification</li> <li>• Anchor: <i>The Outsiders</i> theme development across all 12 chapters; <i>A Raisin in the Sun</i> theme through Acts I–III</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyze how a theme develops over the course of the text, including its relationship to characters, setting, and plot</li> <li>• Synthesize theme analysis with character arc and setting interaction</li> <li>• Anchor: <i>Animal Farm</i> theme across allegory; <i>Braiding Sweetgrass</i> central ideas across essay collection</li> </ul>

### Plot, Character, and Event Development (RL/RI.X.3)

Grade 6 — Baseline	Grade 7 — Adds	Grade 8 — Adds
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Describe how the plot unfolds in a series of episodes</li> <li>Describe how characters respond or change as the plot moves toward resolution</li> <li>In informational text: analyze how a key individual, event, or idea is introduced and elaborated</li> <li>Anchor: <i>Look Both Ways</i> character change across vignettes; <i>Hidden Figures</i> introduction of key individuals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analyze how particular elements interact (setting shapes characters, characters drive plot)</li> <li>In informational text: analyze the interactions between individuals, events, and ideas</li> <li>Anchor: <i>The Outsiders</i> setting-character-conflict interactions; <i>A Raisin in the Sun</i> character interaction driving plot</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents propel action, reveal character, or provoke decisions</li> <li>In informational text: analyze how a text makes connections among and distinctions between individuals, ideas, or events</li> <li>Anchor: <i>Animal Farm</i> pivotal moments propelling allegorical action; <i>March</i> pivotal incidents in civic-rights narrative</li> </ul>
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## Craft and Structure: Cross-Grade Progression

Word choice and figurative language, text structure, and point of view. These three standards (anchors .4, .5, .6) develop students' analytical attention to how texts are made.

### Word Choice and Vocabulary in Context (RL/RI.X.4)

Grade 6 — Baseline	Grade 7 — Adds	Grade 8 — Adds
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Determine meanings of words and phrases in context</li> <li>Include figurative and connotative meanings</li> <li>Analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone</li> <li>Anchor: <i>Look Both Ways</i> figurative language; <i>A Single Shard</i> descriptive language</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Same anchor work as G6</li> <li>Add: analyze the impact of rhymes and other repetitions of sounds (alliteration) on specific verses or stanzas</li> <li>Anchor: <i>Red, White, and Whole</i> verse novel sound and rhythm analysis; <i>A Raisin in the Sun</i> dialogue word choice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Add: analyze the impact of specific word choices, including analogies or allusions to other texts</li> <li>Trace how a word's meaning shifts across a text through connotation and allusion</li> <li>Anchor: <i>Animal Farm</i> allusion and irony; <i>Braiding Sweetgrass</i> allusion across scientific and Indigenous traditions</li> </ul>

### Text Structure (RL/RI.X.5)

Grade 6 — Baseline	Grade 7 — Adds	Grade 8 — Adds
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analyze how a particular sentence, chapter, scene, or stanza fits into the overall structure</li> <li>Analyze how structure contributes to theme, setting, or plot</li> <li>Anchor: <i>A Single Shard</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analyze how the form or structure of a drama or poem (soliloquy, sonnet, scene, stanza) contributes to meaning</li> <li>Add genre-specific structural analysis</li> <li>Anchor: <i>A Raisin in the Sun</i> dramatic structure (Act I/II/III);</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Compare and contrast the structure of two or more texts</li> <li>Analyze how differing structures contribute to meaning and style</li> <li>In informational text: analyze the structure of a specific paragraph in a text</li> </ul>

chapter-by-chapter contribution to theme; <i>The Lightning Thief</i> structural analysis of myth-and-adaptation	<i>Red, White, and Whole</i> verse novel structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Anchor: <i>Animal Farm</i> vs. historical-revolution accounts; <i>Braiding Sweetgrass</i> essay-by-essay structural analysis</li> </ul>
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### Point of View and Author's Purpose (RL/RI.X.6)

Grade 6 — Baseline	Grade 7 — Adds	Grade 8 — Adds
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explain how an author develops the point of view of the narrator or speaker</li> <li>In informational text: determine an author's point of view or purpose</li> <li>Anchor: <i>Look Both Ways</i> narrator-by-narrator point of view; <i>Hidden Figures</i> author's purpose</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analyze how an author develops and contrasts the points of view of different characters or narrators</li> <li>In informational text: analyze how the author distinguishes his or her position from that of others</li> <li>Anchor: <i>The Outsiders</i> Ponyboy's POV vs. Soc/Greaser perspectives; <i>Seen and Unseen</i> contrasting documentary photographers' perspectives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analyze how differences in points of view between characters and the audience or reader create dramatic effects (suspense, humor, dramatic irony)</li> <li>In informational text: analyze how the author acknowledges and responds to conflicting evidence or viewpoints</li> <li>Anchor: <i>Animal Farm</i> dramatic irony between reader and animal characters; <i>March: Book One</i> civic-rights perspective vs. opposing accounts</li> </ul>

### Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: Cross-Grade Progression

Comparing texts across media, evaluating arguments, and comparing texts with similar themes or topics. These three standards (anchors .7, .8, .9) develop students' capacity to synthesize across multiple sources and forms.

### Comparing Across Media (RL/RI.X.7)

Grade 6 — Baseline	Grade 7 — Adds	Grade 8 — Adds
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Compare and contrast the experience of reading a text to listening to or viewing an audio, video, or live version</li> <li>Identify what is similar and different across mediums</li> <li>Anchor: <i>The Lightning Thief</i> novel-to-film comparison; <i>Hidden Figures</i> text-to-video pottery work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Compare and contrast a written story, drama, or poem to its audio, filmed, staged, or multimedia version</li> <li>Analyze the effects of techniques unique to each medium (lighting, sound, camera focus, color)</li> <li>Anchor: <i>A Raisin in the Sun</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analyze the extent to which a filmed or live production of a story or drama stays faithful to or departs from the text</li> <li>Evaluate the choices made by the director or actors</li> <li>Anchor: <i>Animal Farm</i> film adaptation analysis; <i>March</i> graphic-novel medium analysis</li> </ul>

	staged version comparison; <i>The Outsiders</i> novel-to-film analysis	
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## Evaluating Arguments (RI.X.8)

Grade 6 — Baseline	Grade 7 — Adds	Grade 8 — Adds
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trace and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text</li> <li>Distinguish claims that are supported by reasons and evidence from claims that are not</li> <li>Anchor: <i>Hidden Figures</i> argument analysis around scientific contribution</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Same as G6 baseline, plus:</li> <li>Assess whether the reasoning is sound and the evidence is relevant and sufficient to support the claims</li> <li>Anchor: <i>Seen and Unseen</i> primary-source argument analysis; <i>A Raisin in the Sun</i> "I Have a Dream" speech evaluation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether reasoning is sound and evidence is relevant and sufficient</li> <li>recognize when irrelevant evidence is introduced</li> <li>Anchor: <i>March: Book One</i> civic-rights argument analysis; <i>Braiding Sweetgrass</i> evaluating cross-paradigm arguments</li> </ul>

## Comparing Texts on Similar Topics or Themes (RL/RI.X.9)

Grade 6 — Baseline	Grade 7 — Adds	Grade 8 — Adds
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Compare and contrast texts in different forms or genres (stories, poems, historical novels, fantasy stories) in terms of approaches to similar themes and topics</li> <li>In informational text: compare and contrast one author's presentation of events with another's</li> <li>Anchor: <i>The Lightning Thief</i> and ancient myth comparison; <i>Hidden Figures</i> and primary-source documents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Compare and contrast a fictional portrayal of a time, place, or character and a historical account of the same period</li> <li>Understand how authors of fiction use or alter history</li> <li>Anchor: <i>Seen and Unseen</i> fictional vs. historical accounts of Japanese American incarceration; <i>The Outsiders</i> historical setting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analyze how a modern work of fiction draws on themes, patterns of events, or character types from myths, traditional stories, or religious works</li> <li>Describe how the material is rendered new</li> <li>In informational text: analyze a case in which two or more texts provide conflicting information on the same topic</li> <li>Anchor: <i>The Last Cuentista</i> as modern fiction drawing on traditional stories; <i>Animal Farm</i> and historical revolution comparison</li> </ul>

## Vertical Thread: Text Complexity Progression

Reading complexity increases within and across grade levels. The progression below names the qualitative and quantitative shifts students experience as anchor texts and supporting text sets advance from Grade 6 through Grade 8.

The CCSS Appendix A grades 6–8 Lexile band is 925L–1185L. *Threads & Themes* intentionally selects anchors that span *and fall below* the band so that students experience a full range of complex texts; where Lexile falls below band, qualitative demands (structure, layers of meaning, language conventionality, knowledge demands) compensate, and where the form is not Lexile-measurable (drama, verse novel, graphic memoir), the program documents complexity through CCSS qualitative measures. All twelve anchor texts rate Mid-High to High on qualitative complexity, with the dominant driver shifting across the three-year arc: structure in G6, language and meaning in G7, and meaning and language demands in G8 (per Strategic Reading Appendices A–D).

Dimension	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
Anchor-text accessibility (entry point)	Accessible classic novel (Look Both Ways short stories at 750L, <i>A Single Shard</i> at 920L); knowledge-building informational at the high end of the band ( <i>Hidden Figures Young Readers Edition</i> at 950L); mythology/fantasy ( <i>The Lightning Thief</i> at 680L, with qualitative knowledge demands compensating)	Accessible classic novel ( <i>The Outsiders</i> at 780L); graphic nonfiction ( <i>Seen and Unseen</i> at 990L); drama ( <i>A Raisin in the Sun</i> , not Lexile-measurable (drama)); verse novel ( <i>Red, White, and Whole</i> , not Lexile-measurable (verse novel))	Graphic memoir ( <i>March: Book One</i> ); allegorical novel ( <i>Animal Farm</i> at 1170L); literary nonfiction ( <i>Braiding Sweetgrass Young Readers Edition</i> at 950L); speculative fiction ( <i>The Last Cuentista</i> at 820L)
Qualitative complexity	Plot is largely linear; one or two primary narrators; figurative language identified and explained; structure is conventional (novel chapters, short-story sequences)	Multiple narrators or contrasting points of view; dramatic structure; figurative language analyzed for sound and figurative effects; structure includes verse novel and drama forms	Allegory, dramatic irony, allusion, and conflicting points of view; structure compared across two or more texts; multiple genre forms (memoir, allegory, essay collection, speculative)
Reading volume across the year	≈4 anchor texts; supporting text sets per unit; independent reading expectations across the four-unit arc	≈4 anchor texts including drama and verse novel; supporting text sets per unit; independent reading expectations build stamina for grade 8	≈4 anchor texts spanning genres and forms; supporting text sets per unit; independent reading expectations approach grade 9 readiness
Scaffolding (faded across grades)	Heaviest scaffolding for evidence selection, summary construction,	Reduced scaffolding for evidence ("cite several pieces" replaces "cite evidence"); increased	Lightest scaffolding; students evaluate strength of competing evidence and

	and figurative-language identification	independent application across longer texts	synthesize across texts independently
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## Qualitative Complexity Across the Program: Why Below-Band and Non-Lexile Texts Push Students Forward

Five of the twelve anchor texts in *Threads & Themes* fall below the CCSS Appendix A grades 6–8 quantitative band (925L–1185L), and two additional anchors (one drama, one verse novel) are not Lexile-measurable. Per the CCSS framework, quantitative and qualitative measures triangulate text placement. The Strategic Reading guides for each grade (Grade 6, 7, and 8 Strategic Reading: Text Selections & Complexity, Appendices A–D) provide the full CCSS qualitative analyses for every anchor and confirm that every below-band or non-measurable anchor is qualitatively at or above grade level. Below-band Lexiles are not concessions to readability; they are openings into qualitatively rigorous work students could not yet do with band-Lexile prose alone.

The table below pulls each anchor text's Overall Qualitative Rating (0–5 scale) and dominant complexity drivers from the Strategic Reading appendices, and names what specifically pushes students forward in that text. Five of the twelve anchors fall below the CCSS Appendix A grades 6–8 quantitative band (925L–1185L); two more are not Lexile-measurable (drama, verse novel). In every below-band or non-measurable case, the relevant Strategic Reading appendix names the specific compensating qualitative driver. Overall qualitative ratings climb across the program from all Middle High in G6, to a Middle-High/High split in G7, to predominantly High in G8.

Grade · Unit · Anchor	Lexile / Format	Overall Qualitative (0–5 scale)	Primary Complexity Drivers	What's Moving Students Forward	Strategic Reading Reference
<b>Grade 6 — All four anchors rate Middle High (3 on the 0–5 scale)</b>					
<b>G6 · Unit 1</b> <i>Look Both Ways</i>	750L (below band)	<b>Middle High (3)</b>	Structure: HIGH Language: Mid-High	Unconventional vignette form with ten linked narrators and non-chronological micro-structures inside each story. Students develop point-of-view analysis and structural attention up front, before encountering more conventionally organized novels later in the year.	<i>G6 Strategic Reading, Appendix A</i>

Grade · Unit · Anchor	Lexile / Format	Overall Qualitative (0–5 scale)	Primary Complexity Drivers	What's Moving Students Forward	Strategic Reading Reference
<b>G6 · Unit 2</b> <i>A Single Shard</i>	920L (below band)	<b>Middle High (3)</b>	Knowledge: Mid-High Language: Mid-High	Lyrical historical prose, specialized pottery vocabulary, 12th-century Korean cultural context, and a sustained craft-as-identity symbol set.	<i>G6 Strategic Reading, Appendix B</i>
<b>G6 · Unit 3</b> <i>Hidden Figures YRE</i>	950L (in band)	<b>Middle High (3)</b>	Knowledge: HIGH	Civil Rights, Cold War, Space Race, and STEM concepts woven into narrative-expository prose. Highest knowledge demand in G6 — students integrate scientific, historical, and social-systemic frames.	<i>G6 Strategic Reading, Appendix C</i>
<b>G6 · Unit 4</b> <i>The Lightning Thief</i>	680L (below band)	<b>Middle High (3)</b>	Knowledge: HIGH	The program's lowest Lexile, used deliberately as an entry point to dense Greek-mythology and cross-cultural mythology study. Riordan's contemporary voice makes classical allusion and the hero's journey archetype accessible while paired texts extend the challenge.	<i>G6 Strategic Reading, Appendix D</i>
<b>Grade 7 — Overall qualitative rating climbs: two Middle High, two High</b>					
<b>G7 · Unit 1</b> <i>The Outsiders</i>	780L (below band)	<b>Middle High (3)</b>	Meaning: Mid-High Knowledge: Mid-High	First-person retrospective with a circular frame, embedded Robert Frost integration, 1960s class-and-gang knowledge demands. Lexile sits below band by design as the accessible G7 entry point; meaning and knowledge work place it firmly at grade level.	<i>G7 Strategic Reading, Appendix A</i>

Grade · Unit · Anchor	Lexile / Format	Overall Qualitative (0–5 scale)	Primary Complexity Drivers	What's Moving Students Forward	Strategic Reading Reference
<b>G7 · Unit 2</b> <i>Seen and Unseen</i>	990L (in band)	<b>High (4)</b>	Structure: HIGH Knowledge: HIGH	Most structurally complex anchor in G7. Multimodal graphic nonfiction demands simultaneous visual + verbal processing; WWII internment and constitutional-law content require heavy background. First High-rated anchor in the program.	<i>G7 Strategic Reading, Appendix B</i>
<b>G7 · Unit 3</b> <i>A Raisin in the Sun</i>	Drama, not Lexile-measurable	<b>High (4)</b>	Meaning: HIGH Language: HIGH Knowledge: HIGH	Most qualitatively complex G7 anchor. Three-act dramatic form, generational dialect, layered American-Dream meaning, redlining/Great Migration knowledge. Drama is not Lexile-measurable but exceeds the band on three of four qualitative dimensions.	<i>G7 Strategic Reading, Appendix C</i>
<b>G7 · Unit 4</b> <i>Red, White, and Whole</i>	Verse novel, not Lexile-measurable	<b>Middle High (3)</b>	Language: HIGH Structure: Mid-High	Compressed, imagistic poetry with bilingual texture, white space as meaning, and extended symbolism. Caps the year's close-reading progression. Verse is not Lexile-measurable; language demand exceeds the band.	<i>G7 Strategic Reading, Appendix D</i>
<b>Grade 8 — Overall qualitative rating peaks: three High; capstone Middle High by design</b>					
<b>G8 · Unit 1</b> <i>March: Book One</i>	Graphic memoir text leveled per panel	<b>High (4)</b>	Structure: HIGH Knowledge: HIGH	Multimodal graphic memoir with dual timeline and visual-verbal counterpoint; Civil Rights, Jim Crow, SNCC, and	<i>G8 Strategic Reading, Appendix A</i>

Grade · Unit · Anchor	Lexile / Format	Overall Qualitative (0–5 scale)	Primary Complexity Drivers	What's Moving Students Forward	Strategic Reading Reference
				nonviolent-philosophy content.	
<b>G8 · Unit 2</b> <i>Animal Farm</i>	1170L (in band)	<b>High (4)</b>	Meaning: HIGH Language: HIGH Knowledge: HIGH	Both quantitatively and qualitatively the most demanding anchor in the three-year arc. Multi-layered allegory mapping the Russian Revolution; deceptively plain prose masking devastating irony; sustained interpretive demand.	<i>G8 Strategic Reading, Appendix B</i>
<b>G8 · Unit 3</b> <i>Braiding Sweetgrass</i> YRE	950L (in band)	<b>High (4)</b>	Meaning: HIGH Knowledge: HIGH	Multi-epistemological — asks students to reconsider how knowledge itself is constructed across scientific and Indigenous traditions. Braided essay structure, lyrical multi-register prose.	<i>G8 Strategic Reading, Appendix C</i>
<b>G8 · Unit 4</b> <i>The Last Cuentista</i>	820L (below band)	<b>Middle High (3)</b>	Meaning: HIGH Structure: Mid-High	Capstone of the three-year arc, placed below band by design so all G8 students can complete a synthesis-oriented capstone independently. Dual timeline, embedded cuentos, speculative world-building, cultural-survival allegory.	<i>G8 Strategic Reading, Appendix D</i>

### Program-wide qualitative escalation

Across the three years, overall qualitative ratings climb from Middle High in every G6 anchor, to a Middle-High/High split in G7, to predominantly High in G8. The dominant complexity driver shifts predictably across the arc: Structure carries the most complex below-band G6 anchor (*Look Both Ways*); Knowledge anchors the G6 mythology entry (*The Lightning Thief*) and the G6/G8 STEM and ecological nonfiction (*Hidden Figures*, *Braiding Sweetgrass*); Language and Meaning rise in G7's drama and verse (*A Raisin in the Sun* and *Red, White, and Whole*); and Meaning and Language peak in G8's allegory and

multi-epistemological nonfiction (*Animal Farm*, *Braiding Sweetgrass*). In every below-band or non-measurable case, the relevant Strategic Reading appendix names the specific compensating driver and the unit's scaffolding plan addresses it explicitly. *Threads & Themes* documents progression along both axes the CCSS requires: quantitative measures climb where Lexile applies, and qualitative complexity climbs across all twelve anchors regardless of Lexile.

## Supporting Texts: Rigor Across Every Unit

The anchor-text progression is the spine of the program, but the grade-level rigor case rests on the full text inventory in each unit. The Strategic Reading guides for each grade provide complete Short-Form Text Inventories (per unit) and curated Independent Reading Selection tables (per unit), each with title, author, Lexile, qualitative complexity rating, genre, and close-reading purpose. Consult those inventories directly for unit-by-unit detail; the summary below names the volume, range, and rigor profile of the supporting texts.

**Short-form close-reading texts.** Every unit pairs its anchor with a sequenced set of short-form texts that build background knowledge during the Spark phase and support close reading and cross-textual analysis during the Investigation phases. Across the three years, the program includes 107 sequenced short-form texts with a Lexile and qualitative complexity rating documented for every selection. In-band and above-band exemplars at each grade demonstrate that rigor climbs across the year and across the program.

**Differentiation without dilution.** A core program principle, stated explicitly in each Strategic Reading guide's Text Selection Philosophy, is that every student reads the full anchor text without abridgment across all four units, and that differentiation occurs through paired texts, graphic organizers, collaborative discussion protocols, and varying student-centric supports, not through text replacement. The supporting-text inventory therefore, expands access without lowering rigor: Multilingual Learners, students with disabilities, and students reading below grade level encounter the same grade-level anchor and the same grade-band-rigorous short-form and independent-reading options as their peers, with structured support layered in. For full per-text documentation, see each grade's Strategic Reading guide and the Short-Form Text Inventory and Independent Reading Selections tables within each unit section.

## Preparing Students for Grades 9–10 Reading

By the end of Grade 8, students have engaged with the full range of grades 6–8 reading standards across literary and informational texts. The cumulative work prepares them for grade 9–10 reading in the following ways:

- Citing evidence: Students enter high school able to identify the MOST STRONGLY supporting evidence among competing options (RL/RI.8.1), preparing them for the grade 9–10 expectation of evaluating evidence for argument construction.
- Theme and central idea development: Students enter high school able to trace theme across an entire work and analyze its relationship to character, setting, and plot (RL/RI.8.2), preparing them for the grade 9–10 expectation of analyzing how complex characters develop a theme.
- Word choice and figurative analysis: Students enter high school able to analyze allusion and analogy in addition to figurative and connotative meaning (RL/RI.8.4), preparing them for the grade 9–10 expectation of analyzing the cumulative impact of word choice on meaning and tone.

- Comparative analysis: Students enter high school able to compare structure across two or more texts (RL/RI.8.5) and analyze how modern fiction draws on traditional stories (RL.8.9), preparing them for the grade 9–10 expectation of analyzing how an author draws on and transforms source material.
- Evaluating arguments: Students enter high school able to delineate the argument and evaluate whether reasoning is sound and evidence is sufficient (RI.8.8), preparing them for the grade 9–10 expectation of evaluating the argument in seminal U.S. texts.
- Range and stamina: Students enter high school having read four grade-band anchor texts annually across genres (novel, drama, verse, memoir, essay collection, speculative fiction), supporting the grade 9–10 expectation of reading and comprehending grade 9–10 literature and literary nonfiction at the high end of the complexity band.

## Text Quality and Selection

All texts are high quality, culturally sustaining, and chosen for depth of content, literary merit, and student engagement. Text selection spans genres (literature, poetry, drama, informational nonfiction), cultures (African American, Latino/a/x, Asian American, Indigenous, and diverse immigrant narratives), and time periods (contemporary, historical, classical). Reading selections include variation within linguistic groups (different voices and perspectives within each community). Texts support knowledge building around unit topics and connect to science and social studies standards.

## Text Complexity Progression

Texts are evaluated using the qualitative and quantitative models articulated in Appendix A of the Common Core State Standards for ELA (CCSSO/NGA, 2010), with grade-band Lexile ranges aligned to the CCSS stretch bands for Grades 6–8. Texts increase in complexity within and across grades. Complexity is supported through purposeful scaffolding: vocabulary glosses, annotation instruction, read-aloud options, visual aids, and partner reading, designed to be removed strategically as students transition toward independent mastery of complex texts. Full-length novels, plays, and poetry collections anchor each unit. Materials appeal to student interests (contemporary issues, relatable characters, suspenseful plots) while building knowledge.

## Independent Reading

An organized independent reading program provides access to a wide range of grade-level and accessible texts that match students' diverse reading profiles. Independent reading is suggested to occur at least 15 minutes daily. Students choose books that appeal to their interests and reading level, building reading fluency and stamina. Progress is monitored through monthly reading logs and informal teacher conferences.

## Read-Aloud and Complex Text Access

Lessons support teachers in read-alouds from anchor texts, picture books with complex language, and poetry. Read-alouds model fluent reading, expose students to advanced vocabulary and syntax, and provide entry to texts above their independent reading level. Illustrations, graphics, and video excerpts support comprehension of complex ideas. Translation or bilingual read-alouds honor home languages and support comprehension for beginning Multilingual Learners.

## Foundational Skills at Middle School

While foundational skills instruction is primarily K–5, middle school students who have not yet mastered phonics, word recognition, or decoding require continued support. The program provides research-based instruction through:

- Supporting connections with diagnostic screening using California-approved instruments (e.g., Acadience Reading, aimswebPlus Reading, Fountas & Pinnell Phonics Screener) to identify students at risk
- Explicit, sequential, systematic phonics and word study in small groups during Flex Days and Targeted Instruction Huddles
- Multisensory instructional routines aligned with California Dyslexia Guidelines
- Progress monitoring every 2–4 weeks to track improvement and adjust instruction
- Integration of foundational skills instruction with grade-level content through morphological analysis (understanding word families, prefixes, suffixes)

## Reading Fluency

Fluency instruction develops accuracy, pacing, rate, and prosody through:

- Repeated reading of grade-level texts and appropriately-leveled passages
- Oral reading practice in small groups and with partners
- Fluency benchmarks aligned to screening cut-points (e.g., 140–160 words correct per minute by the end of grade 8)
- Varied text types, including controlled-text passages for systematic practice
- Differentiated fluency practice within MTSS tiers based on progress monitoring data

## Comprehensive Language and Literacy at Middle School

Daily instruction includes a wide array of text types and modalities supporting all five ELA/ELD Framework themes: narratives and literature for meaning making, complex syntax and academic vocabulary for language development, persuasive and explanatory writing for effective expression, informational texts and research projects for content knowledge, and systematic practice in phonics, fluency, and word recognition for foundational skills.

### Middle School Foundational Skills

The program addresses middle school foundational skills through Targeted Instruction Huddles, morphological analysis routines, fluency-building within text sets, and diagnostic assessment tools integrated into the MTSS framework.

## Section 5: Writing Instruction

### 5.1: The Writing Rope—Strands that Thicken Across Grades 6–8

Following the Writing Rope model (Sedita, 2019, 2023), *Threads & Themes* weaves multiple strands of skill development across grades, units, and genres. Each strand below is anchored to the CA CCSS standards (CDE, 2013) that govern it, and each cell shows how the strand thickens from Grade 6 through Grade 8. The progression is consistent with the California ELA/ELD Framework’s emphasis on integrated, knowledge-building literacy instruction (CDE, 2015).

Strand	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
<b>Critical Thinking</b> (W.6–8.1, W.6–8.2, W.6–8.9)	Form a clear position or topic on a familiar question; draw evidence from a single text or source to support analysis (W.6.1.a, W.6.2.a, W.6.9).	Acknowledge alternate or opposing claims; reason logically across multiple sources; analyze how authors use reasons and evidence (W.7.1.a, W.7.9.b).	Distinguish claim(s) from counterclaim(s); synthesize evidence across longer texts and complex arguments to support analysis and reflection (W.8.1.a, W.8.9.b).
<b>Syntax (L.6–8.1, L.6–8.3, W.6–8.1.c / .2.c)</b>	Combine simple and compound sentences; use phrases and clauses to clarify relationships among ideas (W.6.1.c, L.6.3.a).	Use words, phrases, and clauses to create cohesion across an essay; vary sentence patterns for meaning and style (W.7.1.c, L.7.3.a).	Use precise, varied syntactic structures to coordinate claim, counterclaim, reasons, and evidence; recognize and correct shifts in voice/mood (W.8.1.c, L.8.1.d, L.8.3.a).
<b>Text Structure</b> (W.6–8.1.a, W.6–8.2.a, W.6–8.4)	Organize ideas with a clear introduction, logical sequence, and concluding statement (W.6.1.a, W.6.2.a, W.6.4).	Preview structure in introductions; use transitions to create cohesion across paragraphs (W.7.1.a, W.7.2.a, W.7.2.c).	Organize information into broader categories; use varied transitions; provide a conclusion that supports the whole piece (W.8.2.a, W.8.2.c, W.8.2.f).
<b>Writing Craft</b> (W.6–8.1.d, W.6–8.2.d, W.6–8.3.d)	Establish and maintain a formal style; use precise, domain-specific vocabulary (W.6.1.d, W.6.2.d).	Maintain formal style across longer pieces; use sensory language to capture action in narrative (W.7.1.d, W.7.3.d).	Use precise, well-chosen language; integrate reflection and varied technique for audience and purpose (W.8.1.d, W.8.2.d, W.8.3.b).
<b>Transcription &amp; Conventions (L.6–8.1, L.6–8.2, W.6–8.5)</b>	Demonstrate command of grade 6 conventions of standard English grammar, usage, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling; edit for clarity (L.6.1, L.6.2, W.6.5).	Demonstrate command of grade 7 conventions; edit for cohesion and consistent style (L.7.1, L.7.2, W.7.5).	Demonstrate command of grade 8 conventions; edit for precision and varied syntactic structures (L.8.1, L.8.2, W.8.5).
<b>Research &amp; Evidence Use (W.6–8.7, W.6–8.8, W.6–8.9)</b>	Conduct short research; gather information from credible print and digital sources; quote or paraphrase, providing basic bibliographic information (W.6.7, W.6.8).	Conduct short research drawing on several sources; assess credibility and accuracy; integrate quotations with logical reasoning (W.7.7, W.7.8).	Conduct sustained research drawing on multiple sources; integrate quotations to address counterclaims and avoid plagiarism (W.8.7, W.8.8, W.8.9.b).

Strand	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
<b>Writing Process</b> (W.6–8.4, W.6–8.5, W.6–8.10)	Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, and rewriting with guidance and support; write routinely over extended and shorter time frames (W.6.4, W.6.5, W.6.10).	Plan with awareness of audience and purpose; revise for cohesion and reasoning; try a new approach as needed (W.7.4, W.7.5, W.7.10).	Plan independently across genres; revise across multiple traits including counterclaim and language precision; focus on how purpose and audience shape language choices (W.8.4, W.8.5, W.8.10).

## How the strands thicken across grades

The compact view below shows, strand by strand, what the rope adds at each grade transition. These shifts are observable in the standards (CDE, 2013) and in the actual writing students produce in unit Performance Tasks.

### Critical Thinking *(W.6–8.1, W.6–8.2, W.6–8.9)*

**G6 → G7:** From forming a single position to weighing alternate views and reasoning across multiple sources. Argument writing adds counterclaims; explanatory writing draws on outside research.

**G7 → G8:** From acknowledging counterclaims to distinguishing and refuting them; synthesis stretches across longer, more complex texts and includes literary works whose rhetorical structure students analyze.

### Syntax *(L.6–8.1, L.6–8.3, W.6–8.1.c / .2.c)*

**G6 → G7:** From combining simple and compound sentences to using clauses for cohesion across an essay; students consciously vary sentence patterns for meaning and style.

**G7 → G8:** From cohesion to coordinating claim, counterclaim, reasons, and evidence in varied syntactic structures; students apply advanced verb forms (active/passive, conditional, subjunctive) to express varying degrees of certainty and nuance (modality) for stylistic effect.

### Text Structure *(W.6–8.1.a, W.6–8.2.a, W.6–8.4)*

**G6 → G7:** Introductions begin to preview structure; transitions create cohesion across paragraphs (not merely clarify relationships among ideas).

**G7 → G8:** Information organizes into broader categories; transitions vary across longer pieces; conclusions support the whole piece, not just follow from it.

### Writing Craft *(W.6–8.1.d, W.6–8.2.d, W.6–8.3.d)*

**G6 → G7:** Students maintain formal style across longer pieces and use sensory language to capture action—not only convey events. Reflection becomes part of narrative endings.

**G7 → G8:** Students use precise, well-chosen language and integrate reflection as a craft move throughout a piece (not just at the end), calibrating technique for audience and purpose.

### Transcription & Conventions *(L.6–8.1, L.6–8.2, W.6–8.5)*

**G6 → G7:** From editing for clarity to editing for cohesion and consistent style across longer pieces.

**G7 → G8:** From cohesion to precision and varied syntactic structures; students apply advanced punctuation (commas, dashes, ellipses) for stylistic effect.

### Research & Evidence Use *(W.6–8.7, W.6–8.8, W.6–8.9)*

**G6 → G7:** From supporting claims with credible sources (often a curated set) to assessing accuracy and credibility of two or more outside sources and integrating quotations with logical reasoning.

**G7 → G8:** From assessment to synthesis across three or more sources, including sources that interpret the topic differently; students develop their own research questions and address counterclaims with cited evidence.

**Writing Process** (*W.6–8.4, W.6–8.5, W.6–8.10*)

**G6 → G7:** From guided revision on a single trait to revising for cohesion and reasoning with audience awareness; trying a new approach as needed.

**G7 → G8:** From supported revision to independent planning across genres and revising across multiple traits—including counterclaim and language precision.

## 5.2: The Three Main Genres of Writing in the CA ELA/ELD Framework

The California ELA/ELD Framework, building on the Common Core State Standards for ELA, organizes writing instruction around three text types—each serving a distinct rhetorical purpose (CDE, 2015; CDE, 2013). *Threads & Themes* addresses all three across every grade through unit Performance Tasks, with rigor and complexity thickening from Grade 6 to Grade 8. The strands of the Writing Rope (Section 1) underlie all three genres; what differs across them is the rhetorical purpose and the forms of writing students produce.

Genre	Anchor Standard	Purpose	Forms students produce in <i>Threads &amp; Themes</i>
<b>Argument</b>	W.6–8.1	Support claims with reasons and relevant evidence; take and defend a position.	Recognition argument paragraph (G6, hybrid w/ Informative); research-based argument essay with counterclaim, rebuttal, and call to action (G7); literary argument grounded in rhetorical analysis of a text (G8).
<b>Informative / Explanatory</b>	W.6–8.2	Examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.	Explanatory essay + process document (G6); comparative explanatory essay (G6); multimodal Digital Witness Exhibit (G7); multimedia Civic Memory Brief (G8); independent research-based multimedia presentation (G8).
<b>Narrative</b>	W.6–8.3	Develop real or imagined experiences using effective techniques, descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.	Personal narrative + Author’s Chair (G6); reflective narrative + author’s note linked to a literary text (G7); literary analysis + original poem (G7, hybrid w/ Informative); flexible narrative along one of four pathways, including speculative, memoir, or reimagined <i>cuento</i> (traditional story) (G8).

### Distribution and emphasis across Grades 6–8

Drawing on the NAEP Writing Framework referenced in CCSS Appendix A, the program builds toward the recommended Grade 8 distribution of approximately 35% argument, 35% informative/explanatory, and 30% narrative across the year (NGA & CCSSO, 2010, Appendix A; CDE, 2015). The grid below shows where each genre is the primary focus of a unit Performance Task across the program.

Grade	Narrative (W.6–8.3)	Informative / Explanatory (W.6–8.2)	Argument (W.6–8.1)
<b>G6</b>	Unit 1— <i>Look Both Ways</i> (Ordinary Moments)	Unit 2— <i>A Single Shard</i> (Becoming the Apprentice) Unit 4— <i>The Lightning Thief</i> (Shared Stories, Shared Lessons)	Unit 3— <i>Hidden Figures</i> (Discovering Hidden Innovators)—hybrid w/ Informative
<b>G7</b>	Unit 1— <i>The Outsiders</i> (Reflective Narrative) Unit 4— <i>Red, White &amp; Whole</i> (Literary Analysis + Original Poem)—hybrid w/ Info	Unit 2— <i>Seen and Unseen</i> (Digital Witness Exhibit)	Unit 3— <i>A Raisin in the Sun</i> (Argument Essay: Barriers Today)
<b>G8</b>	Unit 4— <i>The Last Cuentista</i> (Stories for the Future)	Unit 1— <i>March: Book One</i> (Civic Memory Brief) Unit 3— <i>Braiding Sweetgrass</i> (Research-Based Multimedia Presentation)	Unit 2— <i>Animal Farm</i> (Argument Essay)

## Performance Tasks as authentic assessments

In *Threads & Themes*, each unit’s culminating Performance Task is the deliberate endpoint of an intentional scaffolding sequence—not a separate assessment grafted onto the end. Across the unit, students engage with anchor and supplementary texts to build content knowledge, develop genre-specific writing skill through explicit lessons whose focus standard is from the Writing strand, practice the moves of the genre through formative writing routines (Quick Writes and Look Back writes), and rehearse the full writing process through dedicated Plan, Draft, and Revise lessons. By the time students reach the Performance Task, they are applying knowledge and skills that have been developed throughout the unit—and that build on foundations laid in prior units of the same grade and across the vertical progression from Grade 6 to Grade 8 (CDE, 2015). This is what makes each Performance Task an authentic assessment: students demonstrate transfer of learning the unit has explicitly developed, not isolated test performance.

### 5.3: Argument (W.6.1 → W.7.1 → W.8.1)

Students learn to make and defend a claim with reasons and relevant evidence (CDE, 2013, W.6–8.1). The progression below shows how each sub-strand of the argument standard thickens across grades.

Sub-strand	Grade 6 (W.6.1)	Grade 7 (W.7.1)	Grade 8 (W.8.1)
<b>Anchor</b>	Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.	Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.	Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.
<b>.a Introduction &amp; Organization</b>	Introduce claim(s) and organize the reasons and evidence clearly.	Introduce claim(s), acknowledge alternate or opposing claims, and organize the reasons and evidence logically.	Introduce claim(s), acknowledge and distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and organize

Sub-strand	Grade 6 (W.6.1)	Grade 7 (W.7.1)	Grade 8 (W.8.1)
			the reasons and evidence logically.
<b>.b Development with Evidence</b>	Support claim(s) with clear reasons and relevant evidence, using credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text.	Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant evidence, using accurate, credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text.	Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant evidence, using accurate, credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text.
<b>.c Cohesion &amp; Transitions</b>	Use words, phrases, and clauses to clarify the relationships among claim(s) and reasons.	Use words, phrases, and clauses to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among claim(s), reasons, and evidence.	Use words, phrases, and clauses to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.
<b>.d Style &amp; Language</b>	Establish and maintain a formal style.	Establish and maintain a formal style.	Establish and maintain a formal style.
<b>.e Conclusion</b>	Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from the argument presented.	Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.	Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.

## What students actually write

The argument standard appears as a culminating Performance Task in one unit per grade. At G6, argument writing is part of a hybrid task (Hidden Innovators) that pairs an informative research essay with a shorter argument paragraph; the row below describes only the argument component, with the research essay component shown in the Info/Explanatory table.

Grade/Unit and Task	Anchor text	What students produce	Key rigor markers
<b>G6 U3:—Hidden Innovators (argument paragraph)—hybrid w/ Info</b>	<i>Hidden Figures</i>	A short argument paragraph claiming why a hidden innovator deserves recognition, paired with an informative research essay (in the Info/Explanatory table). Presented to peers with self-reflection.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Single recognition claim with reasons</li> <li>• Reasons grounded in the research essay</li> <li>• First exposure to making a defended claim in writing</li> </ul>
<b>G7 U3:—Argument Essay (Barriers Today)</b>	<i>A Raisin in the Sun</i>	A research-based argument essay on a present-day barrier (education, housing, employment, citizenship, or healthcare) that includes a counterclaim, rebuttal, and call to action.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two credible outside sources</li> <li>• Formal counterclaim + rebuttal</li> <li>• Call to action—student voice positioned to influence</li> </ul>

Grade/Unit and Task	Anchor text	What students produce	Key rigor markers
<b>G8 U2:—Argument Essay (Revolution &amp; Ideals)</b>	<i>Animal Farm</i>	A literary argument explaining how <i>Animal Farm</i> shows revolutions can either protect or corrupt ideals, including analysis of at least one example of persuasive messaging from the text.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Counterclaim with text-evidence rebuttal</li> <li>Rhetorical analysis of propaganda inside the text</li> <li>Domain-specific vocabulary and formal academic register</li> </ul>

## What gets harder across grades

The table below shows what is established at Grade 6 and what is added at each subsequent grade.

Grade 6—Baseline	Grade 7—Adds	Grade 8—Adds
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduce claim</li> <li>Support with clear reasons + relevant evidence</li> <li>Words, phrases, and clauses clarify relationships</li> <li>Establish formal style</li> <li>Conclusion follows from argument</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Acknowledge alternate or opposing claims</li> <li>Reasoning shifts: clear → logical</li> <li>Cohesion across claim, reasons, and evidence</li> <li>Conclusion follows from AND supports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Distinguish claim FROM counterclaim</li> <li>Organize evidence to address counterclaims</li> <li>Cohesion across claim, counterclaim, reasons, and evidence</li> </ul>

## 5.4: Informative / Explanatory (W.6.2 → W.7.2 → W.8.2)

Students learn to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through selection, organization, and analysis (CDE, 2013, W.6–8.2). The progression below shows how each sub-strand thickens across grades.

Sub-strand	Grade 6 (W.6.2)	Grade 7 (W.7.2)	Grade 8 (W.8.2)
<b>Anchor</b>	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.
<b>.a Introduction &amp; Organization</b>	Introduce a topic; organize ideas using strategies such as definition, classification, comparison/contrast, and cause/effect; include formatting, graphics, and multimedia when useful.	Introduce a topic clearly, previewing what is to follow; organize using definition, classification, comparison/contrast, cause/effect; include formatting, graphics, and multimedia when useful.	Introduce a topic clearly, previewing what is to follow; organize ideas, concepts, and information into broader categories; include formatting, graphics, and multimedia when useful.
<b>.b Development with Evidence</b>	Develop the topic with relevant facts, definitions,	Develop the topic with relevant facts, definitions,	Develop the topic with relevant, well-chosen facts,

Sub-strand	Grade 6 (W.6.2)	Grade 7 (W.7.2)	Grade 8 (W.8.2)
	concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.	concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.	definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.
<b>.c Cohesion &amp; Transitions</b>	Use appropriate transitions to clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.	Use appropriate transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.	Use appropriate and varied transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.
<b>.d Style &amp; Language</b>	Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.	Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.	Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.
<b>.e Formal Style</b>	Establish and maintain a formal style.	Establish and maintain a formal style.	Establish and maintain a formal style.
<b>.f Conclusion</b>	Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from the information or explanation presented.	Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented.	Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented.

## What students actually write

Informative/Explanatory writing is the most heavily represented genre across the 6–8 program, with culminating Performance Tasks in five units plus the informative components of two hybrid tasks (G6 U3 and G7 U4). For hybrid tasks, the chart below describes only the Informative/Explanatory component; the companion components appear in the Argument and Narrative tables.

Grade/Unit and Task	Anchor text	What students produce	Key rigor markers
<b>G6 U2:—Becoming the Apprentice</b>	<i>A Single Shard</i>	An explanatory essay tracing a learner’s growth from beginner to skilled creator through mentorship, paired with a step-by-step process document for a craft and a Gallery of Learning presentation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Two texts: <i>A Single Shard</i> + 1 additional text</li> <li>Trace 5 stages of learning (observe, try, fail, refine, create)</li> <li>Translate concepts into a procedural document</li> </ul>
<b>G6 U3:—Hidden Innovators (research essay)—hybrid w/ Argument</b>	<i>Hidden Figures</i>	An informative research essay explaining one hidden innovator’s contribution and the context in which they worked, drawing on curated sources and including at least one visual; paired with a short argument paragraph (in the Argument table).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Independent research on a single innovator</li> <li>Synthesize information from curated sources; 1+ visual</li> <li>Use precise STEM vocabulary and formal academic register</li> </ul>
<b>G6 U4:—Shared Stories, Shared Lessons</b>	<i>The Lightning Thief</i>	A comparative explanatory essay analyzing a shared idea (courage, identity, the unknown) across <i>The Lightning Thief</i> and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Comparative thesis across 2+ texts</li> <li>Comparative transitions (both, while, in contrast)</li> </ul>

Grade/Unit and Task	Anchor text	What students produce	Key rigor markers
		one or more myths, with a comparison visual and seminar discussion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Annotated revision; seminar participation</li> </ul>
<b>G7 U2:—Digital Witness Exhibit</b>	<i>Seen and Unseen</i>	A multimodal Digital Witness Exhibit pairing 2–3 photographs with quotations, letters, or oral-history testimony, with captions and a narration script (live, digital, or podcast format).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One outside source corroborates or challenges the images</li> <li>Ethical storytelling—honor survivor voices</li> <li>Coordinate visuals, captions, and narration as a whole</li> </ul>
<b>G7 U4:—Literary Analysis (Red, White &amp; Whole)—hybrid w/ Narrative</b>	<i>Red, White &amp; Whole</i>	A multi-paragraph literary analysis explaining how one LaRocca poem uses imagery or symbolism to convey complex ideas; paired with an original poem and recitation (in the Narrative table).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Argue what an image or symbol does (not identify)</li> <li>Pair textual evidence with explanatory commentary</li> <li>Apply literary-analysis vocabulary (imagery, symbolism, theme)</li> </ul>
<b>G8 U1:—Civic Memory Brief</b>	<i>March: Book One</i>	A multimedia explanatory Civic Memory Brief (4–5 paragraphs) showing how a Civil Rights action used memory and testimony to inspire systemic change, with a cover page featuring 2+ visuals, headlines, and captions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cite March + 1 additional unit text</li> <li>Trace causal mechanism: memory/testimony → systemic change</li> <li>Cover page design integrates text and visuals</li> </ul>
<b>G8 U3—Research-Based Multimedia Presentation</b>	<i>Braiding Sweetgrass</i>	A research-based multimedia presentation on reciprocity, restoration, or systems balance, drawn from at least three credible sources and orally presented to an audience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Independent research question</li> <li>3+ credible sources, 2 with differing interpretations</li> <li>Synthesize across sources rather than summarize each</li> </ul>

## What gets harder across grades

The table below shows what is established at Grade 6 and what is added at each subsequent grade.

Grade 6—Baseline	Grade 7—Adds	Grade 8—Adds
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduce topic; organize using strategies (definition, classification, compare/contrast, cause/effect)</li> <li>Develop with relevant facts, details, quotations</li> <li>Transitions clarify relationships</li> <li>Precise language; domain-specific vocabulary</li> <li>Conclusion follows from information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preview what is to follow in introduction</li> <li>Transitions create cohesion</li> <li>Conclusion follows from AND supports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organize information into broader categories</li> <li>Well-chosen facts (not just relevant)</li> <li>Varied transitions across longer pieces</li> </ul>

## 5.5: Narrative (W.6.3 → W.7.3 → W.8.3)

Students develop real or imagined experiences using effective technique, descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences (CDE, 2013, W.6–8.3). The progression below shows how each sub-strand thickens across grades.

Sub-strand	Grade 6 (W.6.3)	Grade 7 (W.7.3)	Grade 8 (W.8.3)
<b>Anchor</b>	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.
<b>.a Orientation &amp; Sequence</b>	Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally and logically.	Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and point of view and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally and logically.	Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and point of view and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally and logically.
<b>.b Narrative Techniques</b>	Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, and description, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.	Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, and description, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.	Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, and reflection, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.
<b>.c Cohesion &amp; Transitions</b>	Use a variety of transition words, phrases, and clauses to convey sequence and signal shifts from one time frame or setting to another.	Use a variety of transition words, phrases, and clauses to convey sequence and signal shifts from one time frame or setting to another.	Use a variety of transition words, phrases, and clauses to convey sequence, signal shifts from one time frame or setting to another, and show the relationships among experiences and events.
<b>.d Style &amp; Language</b>	Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to convey experiences and events.	Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to capture action and convey experiences and events.	Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to capture action and convey experiences and events.
<b>.e Conclusion</b>	Provide a conclusion that follows from the narrated experiences or events.	Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on the narrated experiences or events.	Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on the narrated experiences or events.

### What students actually write

Narrative writing anchors the start and end of the 6–8 sequence (G6 U1, G7 U1, G8 U4) and surfaces as the original-poem component of a hybrid task at G7 U4. For the hybrid task, the row below describes only the original-poem component; the literary-analysis component appears in the Info/Explanatory table.

Grade/Unit and Task	Anchor text	What students produce	Key rigor markers
<b>G6 U1: —Ordinary Moments</b>	<i>Look Both Ways</i>	A personal narrative about an ordinary moment that reveals identity or belonging, followed by an Author’s Chair excerpt presentation and Community Circle discussion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Voice and identity from a small moment</li> <li>• Demonstrate revision; explain one change made</li> <li>• Provide evidence-based feedback on peer writing</li> </ul>
<b>G7 U1:—Reflective Narrative</b>	<i>The Outsiders</i>	A reflective narrative about feeling like an outsider or experiencing empathy across a divide, ending with an author’s note that connects the personal story to <i>The Outsiders</i> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conflict + growth + reflection arc required</li> <li>• Author’s note links lived experience to the novel</li> <li>• Varied sentence structure and sensory language for voice</li> </ul>
<b>G7 U4:—Original Poem (Red, White &amp; Whole)—hybrid w/ Info</b>	<i>Red, White &amp; Whole</i>	An original poem built around a personal image or symbol, with an author’s note explaining writerly choices and a poetry recitation; paired with a literary analysis (in the Info/Explanatory table).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use 1+ named craft move purposefully (line breaks, repetition, juxtaposition)</li> <li>• Author’s note opens a window into the writer’s thinking</li> <li>• Recitation conveys voice, tone, and intent</li> </ul>
<b>G8 U4:—Stories for the Future</b>	<i>The Last Cuentista</i>	A forward-looking narrative—true, fictional, or blended—written along one of four pathways (speculative story, memoir, reimagined cuento/myth, or novel continuation), with optional multimedia and audience-beyond-classroom publishing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Choose and execute 1 of 4 narrative pathways with genre awareness</li> <li>• Convey theme about how memory and identity shape the future</li> <li>• Use advanced verb forms and stylistic punctuation for effect</li> </ul>

## What gets harder across grades

The table below shows what is established at Grade 6 and what is added at each subsequent grade.

Grade 6—Baseline	Grade 7—Adds	Grade 8—Adds
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish context; introduce narrator/characters</li> <li>• Use dialogue, pacing, description</li> <li>• Transitions for sequence and time/setting shifts</li> <li>• Sensory language to convey events</li> <li>• Conclusion follows from events</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish point of view</li> <li>• Sensory language captures the action</li> <li>• Conclusion follows from AND reflects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Add reflection as a narrative technique</li> <li>• Transitions show relationships among experiences and events</li> </ul>

## 5.6: The Research and Writing Element

Research and writing are deeply intertwined in *Threads & Themes*. While the three text types (Sections 3–5) describe what students produce, the program’s research thread describes how students gather, evaluate, and synthesize information to ground that writing in evidence. Research and media literacy instruction is grounded in the California Model School Library Standards (CDE, 2010) and the CA CCSS Writing standards for research (W.6–8.7, W.6–8.8, W.6–8.9), and it is delivered through five core routines that recur across every unit. For the full progression, see the *Threads & Themes* Media Literacy Toolkit, the companion document to this progression (Newsela, 2026).

### The five core media-literacy routines

Five core routines anchor the research and media-literacy progression. They are introduced in sequence in Units 1 and 2, then reactivated and deepened across the year (Newsela, 2026).

Routine	What it teaches
<b>Inquiry Protocol: Focus &amp; Frame</b>	Students move from a broad topic to a focused, researchable question by applying pre-search strategies (brainstorming, KWL, prior-knowledge activation). Used to open every research cycle.
<b>Source Evaluation (CARP)</b>	Students evaluate sources using Currency, Accuracy, Relevance, Purpose/Point of View. Introduced in Unit 1 L2 and reactivated throughout the year.
<b>Visual Rhetoric</b>	Students analyze how visual sources (photographs, artwork, propaganda, data visualizations) use framing, angle, color, symbol, and composition to make arguments. Introduced in Unit 2 L1.
<b>Corroboration</b>	Students find a second source on the same topic and ask: where do these sources agree? where do they differ, and why might that be (purpose, audience, time period, perspective)? Introduced in Unit 2 L2; deepens to lateral reading in Grade 8.
<b>Digital Citizenship &amp; Citation</b>	Students engage with the ethical, legal, and civic dimensions of information use. Topics escalate across years: attribution and plagiarism (G6) → algorithmic influence and health misinformation (G7) → lateral reading and information ecosystems (G8).

### Unit 3 in each grade: the full research investigation

In each grade, Unit 3 is a full research investigation in which students apply ALL five routines to sources they choose themselves—not sources curated by the teacher. Unit 3 is therefore the program’s richest summative evidence of media-literacy growth (Newsela, 2026b). The research demands intentionally escalate from Grade 6 to Grade 8, so students arrive in high school having practiced research as a core writing skill multiple times across grade levels.

Grade · Unit	Anchor text	What students do (research demand)
<b>G6 U3:—Hidden Innovators (Discovering Hidden Innovators)</b>	<i>Hidden Figures</i>	First full research cycle: narrow a research question, apply CARP to evaluate sources, paraphrase and attribute responsibly, and integrate at least one visual (chart, graph, timeline, statistic). Students translate research into both an informative essay and a recognition argument.
<b>G7 U3:—Argument Essay (Barriers Today)</b>	<i>A Raisin in the Sun</i>	Research-driven argument: 2+ credible outside sources on a present-day barrier. Source evaluation deepens to accuracy and recognition of algorithmic

Grade · Unit	Anchor text	What students do (research demand)
		influence; students integrate quotations with logical reasoning and address counterclaims with cited evidence.
<b>G8 U3:—Research-Based Multimedia Presentation</b>	<i>Braiding Sweetgrass</i>	Independent research question with 3+ credible sources, including 2+ that interpret the topic differently. Students apply lateral reading, distinguish primary from secondary sources, synthesize across sources rather than summarize each, and present findings with multimedia and visual displays.

## Digital citizenship as a vertical thread

A digital citizenship thread runs across all four units in every grade, increasing in sophistication from personal practice in Grade 6 to systemic analysis in Grade 8 (Newsela, 2026). The arc deliberately parallels the writing progression: as students take on more demanding writing tasks, they take on more demanding ethical and analytical responsibilities for the sources they use.

Grade 6—Self & Story	Grade 7—Belonging & Witness	Grade 8—Systems & Stewardship
<b>Personal practice.</b> Sources belong to someone; information has an origin and purpose. Image attribution and intellectual property for visual sources. Cultural knowledge belongs to communities—attribution raises questions beyond standard citation.	<b>Perspective and influence.</b> Sources have origin, purpose, and audience. IP for images and testimony. Algorithmic influence is named as a factor in what information students encounter. Health misinformation and responsible sharing.	<b>Systemic analysis.</b> Lateral reading as the fact-checker’s strategy against propaganda. Algorithms as systems with power. Digital archives, search platforms, and which stories survive—information ecosystems are designed by people with interests.

## 5.7: Preparation for Academic Writing in High School

The 6–8 vertical progression of writing skills, knowledge, and habits prepares students for the full range of writing they will encounter in high school and beyond. By the end of Grade 8, students have produced substantial writing across all three CCSS text types, conducted multiple cycles of independent research, and developed the source-evaluation and digital-citizenship habits that anchor academic writing across content areas.

### What students bring with them to high school

- **Sustained argument writing grounded in evidence** with formal counterclaim and rebuttal (W.8.1)—the foundation of academic argument writing across high-school English, history, and science courses.
- **Independent research using multiple credible sources** with differing interpretations, integrated through synthesis rather than summary (W.8.7, W.8.8, W.8.9.b)—the foundation for high-school research papers, term papers, and inquiry projects.
- **Multimodal and multimedia composition** (Civic Memory Brief, Digital Witness Exhibit, Research-Based Multimedia Presentation)—preparing students for the digital storytelling, podcasting, and visual-essay work expected in high school and college.
- **Reflective and personal narrative voice** (G6 U1, G7 U1, G8 U4)—preparing students for college application essays, personal statements, and the reflective writing expected in high-school humanities courses.

- **Source evaluation and digital citizenship**—CARP-based source evaluation, lateral reading, citation practices, and rhetorical analysis of media texts (Newsela, 2026b)—preparing students for the heightened source demands of high-school research and the information ecosystem they will navigate as digital citizens.
- **Editing for cohesion, precision, and varied syntactic structures** (W.8.5; L.8.1–3)—the foundation of polished writing in any genre.

Together, these capacities constitute the integrated skill set students need to engage with the rigor of high-school writing across content areas—from formal argument essays in English class to lab reports in science to research papers in history to multimodal projects in any subject. The vertical 6–8 progression is intentionally designed to build this capacity over three years of knowledge-building inquiry, ensuring that students transition to secondary education as versatile, independent writers rather than recipients of isolated instruction.

## 5.8: How Writing Instruction is Delivered

The progression of writing skills described in Sections 1–7 is enacted through three integrated instructional approaches that operate across every unit: an explicit writing process, a reciprocal reading-writing pedagogy, and a sustained programmatic Writing Journal that anchors low-stakes writing across the year.

### The Writing Process

Every unit includes a complete writing cycle: prewriting (brainstorming, planning, outlining), drafting (guided and independent), revision (peer feedback, self-assessment, teacher conferencing), editing (conventions, proofreading), and publishing (presentation or sharing). Writing is taught daily through mentor texts, explicit instruction in organization and craft, and modeled writing.

### The Reading–Writing Connection

Reading and writing develop as reciprocal processes, and the program builds writing into instruction in two distinct but mutually reinforcing roles. As a process of learning—writing-to-learn—daily writing is the primary tool students use to think with a text: to slow down, test an idea, notice what they don’t yet understand, and bridge reading to discussion. Quick writes, annotation, response-to-text prompts, exit tickets, and the sustained low-stakes work captured in the programmatic Writing Journal all serve this function. The point is not polished prose; it is the cognitive work the writing enables. As a product of learning, learning-to-write, writing is also how students consolidate and demonstrate what they have come to know, through extended responses, multi-paragraph analyses, research write-ups, and the Performance Tasks that culminate each unit. Both functions appear inside every unit, and instruction is sequenced so that low-stakes writing-to-learn work feeds the higher-stakes writing students are later asked to produce.

The reverse direction—students learning to write by reading like writers—is built into the program through systematic mentor-text instruction. Students analyze craft moves (word choice, sentence structure, organization, voice) in the unit’s anchor and supporting texts before applying those moves in their own writing. Close reading lessons include explicit attention to how authors construct meaning, develop arguments, and create narrative tension. Revision checklists are grounded in mentor texts read

earlier in the unit, so students don't revise against an abstract rubric; they revise against the writing they have just spent a week analyzing. Across the unit arc, the two directions reinforce each other: students write about what they read to understand it more deeply, and they read with a writer's eye to produce stronger writing of their own—a reciprocal design supported by research on integrated reading-writing instruction (Graham et al., 2018; Kim, 2020).

## The Threads & Themes Writing Journal

The Writing Journal is a single, student-owned notebook used across the year as the program's primary space for writing-to-learn—the sustained, low-stakes writing through which students think with texts and develop ideas before producing more formal writing. The Journal serves three interlocking purposes:

- **Homework anchor.** Most homework writing (e.g., reflection prompts, evidence-gathering tasks, vocabulary application, reading responses) is completed in the Journal. These are writing-to-learn moves: students use the act of writing to process the day's reading, surface what they don't yet understand, and arrive at the next class with their thinking already in motion. Because the Journal travels home and back, it preserves continuity between school-based and at-home writing without distributing additional materials.
- **Longer-form writing space.** Whenever a writing response exceeds a single paragraph (e.g., extended responses, multi-paragraph reflections, response-to-text work, or draft sections of a Performance Task) students compose in the Journal. This is where exploratory writing-to-learn matures into writing as a product of learning: students reread and expand their thinking across days and weeks, and loose thinking takes shape as the kind of polished writing the program eventually asks them to produce. Anchoring longer-form work in a single dedicated space supports recursive revision rather than isolated, disconnected drafts.
- **Personal Dictionary home.** Teachers may choose to use a reserved section at the back of the Journal to house each student's Personal Dictionary. Co-locating word study and writing practice in the same notebook positions vocabulary as a writer's resource, an important part of the learning-to-write loop. Students consult and contribute to the Dictionary as they draft, applying words encountered in anchor and supporting texts to their own writing rather than studying vocabulary in isolation.

## Section 6: Academic Language & Vocabulary

### Spelling Instruction

Direct, explicit spelling instruction is taught through morphological patterns (word families, prefixes, suffixes, roots) and phonemic principles. Spelling tasks are based on concepts students are learning in reading and writing. Spelling is explicitly linked to decoding as a reciprocal skill: understanding how words are built (spelling) strengthens decoding, and vice versa. Weekly spelling lists include words from anchor texts, domain-specific vocabulary, and high-frequency words.

### Vocabulary Instruction

Vocabulary instruction goes beyond word memorization to deep understanding. Each unit teaches:

- Tier 2 academic vocabulary (words appearing across domains): argue, analyze, compare, evaluate, demonstrate (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2013)
- Tier 3 domain-specific words: respiration (science), tyranny (social studies), protagonist (literature)
- High-frequency words and word families for students at foundational levels
- Word-learning strategies: using context clues, morphological analysis, cognate recognition across languages, dictionary skills, synonym/antonym work

Vocabulary is taught through multiple modalities: visuals, gestures, acting out meanings, creating word webs, and repeated exposure in reading and writing contexts. New words appear regularly in discussions, read-alouds, and written work, building breadth and depth of vocabulary knowledge.

For Multilingual Learners, cognate instruction explicitly leverages home-language knowledge as an asset for academic vocabulary acquisition. Teachers use cognate charts, Spanish–English cognate pairs, and cross-linguistic word analysis to help students recognize that their existing linguistic repertoire accelerates English vocabulary learning (Bravo, Hiebert, & Pearson, 2005; August, Carlo, Dressler, & Snow, 2005).

## Section 7: Speaking, Listening & Discussion

### Collaborative Conversations

Students engage in collaborative discussions using structured protocols. Discussion routines include: think-pair-share, concentric circles, fishbowl, and Socratic seminars. Each protocol includes sentence frames, turn-taking expectations, and active listening cues. Students learn to ask clarifying questions, build on peers' ideas, and respectfully challenge thinking. Discussion is intentionally integrated into every lesson, ensuring multiple opportunities for students to talk and listen throughout the week.

### Direct Teaching and Inquiry Balance

Instruction balances direct teaching (teacher models, explains, demonstrates) with student inquiry to foster an intellectually challenging environment where students ask questions, explore ideas, and discover patterns. In reading lessons, teachers use think-alouds to model comprehension strategies, then gradually release responsibility to students through guided and independent practice. In discussion, teachers model sentence frames and discussion moves, then students apply them with less scaffolding over time.

### Oral Rehearsal and Language Development

Students engage in oral rehearsal—talking through ideas before writing—in every unit. Rehearsal might occur in partner talk, small-group discussion, or whole-group sharing. This practice supports Multilingual Learners by giving them time to formulate thoughts in a low-pressure setting and move from oral to written language with greater confidence. Oral rehearsal also strengthens academic language development: students hear themselves using complex syntax and academic vocabulary, building fluency and automaticity.

### Presentation Skills

Students develop discrete presentation skills through explicit instruction during Showcase arcs and additional opportunities within Core Unit lessons. Presentation lessons teach organization of ideas for oral delivery, audience awareness, effective use of visual aids, and formal academic register. Students rehearse presentations with peers using structured feedback protocols, revise based on feedback, and deliver final presentations to varied audiences. For Multilingual Learners, presentation lessons provide targeted support through sentence frames for formal speaking, vocabulary for transitions and signposting, and opportunities to rehearse in small groups before whole-class delivery.

### Media Literacy and Source Evaluation (SL.2, SL.3)

Students live in a media-saturated environment. The program develops critical media literacy—the ability to analyze, evaluate, and produce media—as an integrated strand within ELA instruction, not a stand-alone supplement.

Media analysis appears within existing units at points where the anchor text or unit theme creates a natural connection to media literacy skills:

- **Evaluating sources and identifying bias:** Students learn to assess the credibility of sources, identify author perspective and bias, and distinguish between fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment. These skills are practiced during Research lessons and text-set analysis in every unit, with explicit instruction in source evaluation protocols.
- **Analyzing information in diverse media formats (SL.2):** Students analyze how information is presented differently across formats—print, video, audio, infographics, and social media. At least two units per grade include lessons in which students compare how the same topic or event is represented across media types.
- **Evaluating a speaker’s argument (SL.3):** Students evaluate spoken arguments in speeches, podcasts, and video presentations. At least one unit per grade includes a formal evaluation of a speaker’s claims, reasoning, and evidence using a structured evaluation protocol.

Natural integration points within the current scope and sequence include: the *Animal Farm* unit (Grade 8)—propaganda analysis, language manipulation, and media as a tool of power; the *Seen and Unseen* unit (Grade 7)—whose stories are told and whose are hidden in media; and the *Hidden Figures* unit (Grade 6)—how narrative framing shapes public understanding of historical events.

## Multimedia Production (SL.5)

Students include multimedia components in presentations and projects. Performance Task options in at least one unit per grade include a multimedia format—a digital presentation, podcast, video essay, or infographic—alongside written options. Multimedia production is taught through explicit instruction in visual design principles, audio/video composition, and digital tools during Showcase arcs.

The program’s Media Literacy Toolkit supplies teacher-facing routines, student-facing graphic organizers, and rubrics for media analysis and production tasks. The Toolkit’s routines are embedded at specific points in the scope and sequence, referenced in lesson plans, and assessed through rubrics aligned to SL.2, SL.3, and SL.5.

## Section 8: Assessment Architecture

The *Threads & Themes* Assessment Architecture provides a continuous stream of actionable data through a three-tier assessment model. Grounded in research on the impact of timely feedback, this model moves from daily formative checks to summative Performance Tasks that measure the transfer of learning. This integrated design ensures that assessment drives differentiation within the MTSS framework and tracks the linguistic growth of English learners in real time.

For more detailed information on our Assessment Architecture, please reference the Assessment Playbook.

### Three-Tier Assessment Model

Assessment Tier	When & How	Use of Data
<b>Formative Assessments (Daily)</b>	During and after each lesson: Pulse Checks, Reflections, Quick Writes, and Checks for Understanding	Informs immediate instructional adjustments; identifies who needs more time, modeling, or challenge that day
<b>End of Investigation</b>	End of each investigation: multiple choice, technology-enhanced, and spelling items aligned to the rigor of high-stakes state assessments.	Guides identification of students for small-group, differentiated assignments for Flex Days; supports identification of students who may need targeted intervention.
<b>Performance Tasks</b>	End of unit: students demonstrate mastery of key standards through a complex task (essay, presentation, project)	Grades, unit marks, and identification of standards mastered/needing reteaching

### Foundational Skills Assessment

The Assessment Playbook (Course Page › Reviewer Resources) provides guidance for selecting and administering screening, progress monitoring, and diagnostic assessments within an MTSS framework. The playbook recommends California-approved instruments—including Acadience Reading and aimswebPlus Reading for universal screening and progress monitoring, and the Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing (CTOPP-2), Gray Oral Reading Tests (GORT-5), Test of Word Reading Efficiency (TOWRE-2), and Woodcock-Johnson V for diagnostic evaluation. Teachers are advised to screen all students at least once during the first four to six weeks of the school year to establish baseline data and identify students at risk for reading difficulties, including dyslexia. Students scoring below benchmark receive tiered intervention: Tier 2 students are progress monitored every two weeks, Tier 3 students every week, with data reviewed at MTSS meetings to guide regrouping and instructional adjustments. Diagnostic assessments that include rapid automatic naming alongside phonological awareness and word recognition measures support the identification of dyslexia characteristics.

### Assessment for Multilingual Learners

Assessment of Multilingual Learners' language development is integrated into the program's three-tier model. Performance Tasks include language-focused rubric dimensions that evaluate academic

vocabulary use, syntactic complexity, and discourse organization alongside content mastery. End-of-Investigation Checkpoints include items that assess language comprehension in context. Daily Checks for Understanding incorporate language production observations, and teachers monitor Multilingual Learners' use of sentence frames, academic vocabulary, and discussion participation to inform immediate instructional adjustments. Teacher Edition annotations guide educators in interpreting assessment data through a language-development lens, distinguishing between content-understanding gaps and language-production challenges. Progress in language development is tracked across units using the program's formative data, informing I-ELD differentiation decisions at Flex Day grouping.

## Performance Task Rubrics and Anchor Papers

Each unit's Performance Task is scored using a task-specific analytic rubric built directly from the focal CCSS standards the task is designed to assess. Rubrics are not a fixed template applied uniformly across units; the rows in a Grade 8 argument essay rubric—thesis and argument claim (W.8.1.a), evidence and analysis (W.8.1.b), counterclaim and rebuttal (W.8.1.b), organization and transitions (W.8.1.c), language and style (W.8.1.d, W.8.1.e), and conventions (L.8.1, L.8.2)—differ from those in a Grade 6 explanatory essay or a research presentation, because each task assesses a different cluster of standards. Within every rubric, each row is explicitly mapped to the CCSS standard it assesses, so the rubric doubles as a standards-coverage record for the task.

All Performance Task rubrics share a common three-level proficiency scale—**1—Beginning**, **2—Developing**, **3—Proficient**—with descriptors written in student-facing language. Each rubric is designed to be used by students as a pre-submission self-check ("Ask yourself: does my work meet the Proficient description in every row?") as well as by teachers for scoring. The same descriptors that guide the teacher's score also guide the student's revision.

Scoring calibration guidance is provided in the Assessment Playbook, including protocols for collaborative scoring sessions and processes for resolving scoring disagreements.

## Section 9: Teacher Edition & Instructional Planning Guidance

### Comprehensive Teacher Support

The Teacher Edition includes: (1) a full standards map indicating which standards are addressed in each lesson, unit, and grade band; (2) detailed pacing guides for 180 days with daily lesson plans; (3) answer keys and rubrics for assessment; (4) technology integration suggestions and digital resource guides; (5) cultural responsiveness notes and suggestions for connecting to student backgrounds; (6) research-based instructional routines in a companion Routines Guide; and (7) implementation support resources described below.

### Implementation Support Built Into Program Materials

*Threads & Themes* is designed so that implementation support is embedded in the materials themselves rather than dependent on external training. Four features of the program architecture directly support teacher learning during use:

- **Routines Guide with gradual release structure.** The Routines Guide (Course Page > Reviewer Resources) provides detailed implementation guidance for every instructional routine in the program. Each routine entry includes a pedagogical rationale (Why This Routine Matters), guidance for the first use (How to Introduce It), step-by-step procedures, facilitation tips with common pitfalls, and differentiation suggestions. Routines follow an explicit I Do → We Do → You Do → Reflect structure; lesson materials cue teachers when a routine is appearing for the first time versus when students should be driving it independently. This design means the Routines Guide functions as job-embedded professional learning—teachers build expertise through repeated, supported use of the same routines across the year.
- **Multisensory Routine Fidelity Checklists.** All multisensory routines include dedicated fidelity checklists. The checklists identify the critical components of each routine and can be used during lesson planning, instructional coaching cycles, peer observations, or administrator walkthroughs to confirm that routines are delivered as designed. The Routines Guide explicitly names these checklists as tools for coaching and team observations.
- **If/Then contingent supports in every lesson.** The Differentiation Playbook provides decision-tree-based supports embedded at each phase of the four-phase lesson structure (Launch, Literacy Lab, Learning in Action, Look Back). These If/Then prompts guide teachers through responsive instructional decisions in real time.—For example: “If students define only → Prompt: Can you give an example?” Rather than requiring teachers to have mastered differentiation theory before they teach, the decision trees scaffold responsive practice at the point of use.
- **Differentiation annotations in every lesson.** Margin annotations in the teacher edition provide I-ELD differentiation guidance for English learners at Emerging, Expanding, and Bridging proficiency levels, as well as scaffolds for students with disabilities and students approaching grade level. These annotations make differentiation decisions visible and immediate rather than requiring teachers to consult a separate resource.

### Predictable Architecture Reduces Implementation Complexity

The program’s repeating lesson structure—a consistent four-phase arc (Launch, Literacy Lab, Learning in Action, Look Back) used across every Reading, Writing, Academic Discussion, and Research lesson follows

the same structure, totaling 50 minutes. Teachers internalize the structural rhythm within the first unit, which allows them to focus on content, student responsiveness, and differentiation rather than navigating unfamiliar lesson formats. The seven lesson types (Spark, Reading, Writing, Academic Discussion, Presentation, Research, Flex) rotate within that same structure, providing instructional variety without requiring teachers to learn a new architecture for each lesson type.

This design reduces—but does not eliminate—the professional learning investment required for effective implementation. The fidelity checklists, facilitation tips, and If/Then decision supports embedded in program materials provide ongoing, job-embedded guidance that complements any additional professional learning districts choose to provide.

## Integrated ELD Guidance in this Teacher Edition

Across both Program 1 (Basic ELA) and the integrated-ELA portion of Program 2 (Basic ELA/ELD), every lesson is designed to advance students' academic English while they engage with grade-level content. Each lesson carries dual objectives—an ELA Content Objective and an ELD Language Objective—so language development is named as a goal of the day rather than treated as a byproduct of reading or writing.

The Teacher Edition makes integrated ELD actionable through four kinds of in-lesson support. **Annotations** in the Literacy Lab and Learning in Action phases of all lessons provide differentiation moves for English learners, while Academic Discussion and Presentation lessons also break that support into the three CA ELD proficiency levels—Emerging, Expanding, and Bridging. **If/Then contingent prompts** give teachers responsive language for moments when student production reveals a gap (for example, "If students define only → Prompt: Can you give an example?"). **Look-Fors** describe what target language production sounds like at each proficiency level, so teachers can assess in real time whether students are accurately using target structures and vocabulary to make meaning. And **embedded student-facing supports**—sentence frames at three proficiency levels, oral-rehearsal supports, cognate flags, vocabulary glosses, and Academic Talk Stems appear at point of use within the lesson rather than in a separate appendix.

The result is a single pedagogical commitment: language development is inseparable from content learning, and students develop academic English most effectively when they are using it to do real intellectual work with grade-level texts and ideas. In Program 2 (Basic ELA/ELD), this integrated ELA work is paired with a separate Designated ELD block, described in the companion Designated ELD Design Framework; the integrated ELA design described here is the same in both programs.

## Technology and Digital Components

The Teacher Edition references a digital library of texts, videos, interactive resources, and assessment tools accessible through a learning platform. Digital tools include progress monitoring dashboards, guided small-group instruction resources, and interactive practice activities that adjust difficulty based on performance.

## Cross-Content Collaboration Opportunities

The CA ELA/ELD Framework grounds literacy as a shared responsibility across the disciplines. Chapter 1 names the “cross-disciplinary nature” of the literacy standards for History/Social Studies, Science, and

Technical Subjects. Chapter 2 highlights “interdisciplinary units” and inquiry-based learning as primary vehicles for this work.

*Threads & Themes* is built to enable that kind of collaboration. Because each unit is anchored by a knowledge-building inquiry, every unit creates natural points of intersection with social studies, science, and the arts. Every unit also moves students toward an Inquiry-Based Performance Task that asks them to synthesize evidence from multiple sources. ELA teachers can identify these connections and use them to anchor collaborative planning conversations with content-area colleagues without developing new materials.

Three program features already do most of this work. The **Connections to Knowledge Building** information at the start of each lesson names the disciplinary knowledge a lesson activates or works to build, giving the ELA teacher a quick reference for what colleagues in social studies, science, or the arts may be able to teach in tandem. The program’s **interdisciplinary anchor text balance** (Contemporary, Canonical, STEAM, Social Studies) means that at least two of every grade’s four units have an anchor text category that points directly at another content area’s curriculum. And each unit’s **Inquiry-Based Performance Task** is the most natural site for cross-content collaboration: content-area teachers can serve as consulting experts, co-evaluators of evidence and reasoning, or audience members for student presentations.

The chart below names specific opportunities for cross-content collaboration by unit. Each row identifies the natural content-area partner(s), the CCSS literacy standards for History/Social Studies (RH) and Science and Technical Subjects (RST) the partnership most directly supports, the relevant grade-level California content standards (H/SS and NGSS Preferred Integrated pathway), and a concrete collaboration the ELA teacher can initiate using existing program features. RH and RST standards are listed in the grade 6–8 band as defined by the CCSS.

★ **Direct content alignment.** Five units (highlighted) intersect directly with what social studies or science teachers must teach in California in that grade. These are the strongest sites for cross-content collaboration. The remaining units offer **adjacent connections**: conceptual or thematic bridges to required grade-level content even when the specific historical or scientific topic does not align. The chart names these explicitly so that every unit offers a clear starting point for collaboration.

Unit	Anchor, Topic & Aligned RH / RST Standards	Content-Area Connection (Grade-Aligned Standards)	Collaboration Opportunity
6.1	<p><b>Look Both Ways</b></p> <p>Setting Out: Voice, Self &amp; Agency (community, voice, ordinary moments)</p> <p><b>Aligned RH / RST standards:</b> RH.6–8.1, RH.6–8.2</p>	<p><b>H/SS (adjacent):</b> HSS 6.4.2 (Athenian citizenship, Pericles' Funeral Oration) and HSS 6.6.3 (Confucian thought on the individual's role in social and ethical order). Grade 6 H/SS asks how ancient civilizations defined the relationship between individual identity and community, a parallel inquiry to the unit's questions about voice and belonging.</p> <p><b>Science:</b> No direct Grade 6 alignment.</p>	<p>Co-plan with the Grade 6 SS teacher to bring the unit's questions about voice and belonging into conversation with HSS 6.4.2 (the invention of citizenship in Athens). Students compare how ancient civilizations and the unit's contemporary stories each define what it means to belong.</p>

Unit	Anchor, Topic & Aligned RH / RST Standards	Content-Area Connection (Grade-Aligned Standards)	Collaboration Opportunity
6.2	<p><b>A Single Shard</b></p> <p>The Art of Learning (Korean apprenticeship, pottery science)</p> <p><b>Aligned RH / RST standards:</b> RH.6–8.1, RH.6–8.2, RH.6–8.4, RH.6–8.7 RST.6–8.3, RST.6–8.4, RST.6–8.7</p>	<p><b>Science:</b> NGSS MS-PS3 Energy (heat and thermal energy in firing, Grade 6). Directly aligned.</p> <p><b>Visual / Media Arts:</b> Pottery is a common Grade 6 art project; the unit can run alongside students' own clay work, with the arts teacher leading instruction in form, technique, and cultural traditions of pottery.</p> <p><b>H/SS (adjacent):</b> HSS 6.6 (Ancient China), including 6.6.3 (Confucian teachings on learning and the role of the teacher) and 6.6.7 (Silk Roads). The medieval Korean setting itself sits outside Grade 6 H/SS, but Confucian frameworks for mentorship and apprenticeship run through the Grade 6 SS curriculum and offer a strong conceptual parallel to the unit's apprenticeship arc.</p>	<p>Invite the science teacher to consult on the explanatory essay and process diagram (Performance Task) using MS-PS3 vocabulary for heat transfer (RST.6–8.7).</p> <p>Coordinate with the visual or media arts teacher when students are completing a Grade 6 pottery project so that students connect their own clay work to Tree-ear's apprenticeship and to the cultural traditions of Korean pottery.</p> <p>When the SS teacher is teaching HSS 6.6, share the unit's mentorship arc to coordinate vocabulary about Confucian frameworks for learning.</p>
6.3	<p><b>Hidden Figures</b></p> <p>Curiosity, Evidence &amp; Discovery (Space Race, Civil Rights, women in STEM)</p> <p><b>Aligned RH / RST standards:</b> RH.6–8.1, RH.6–8.2, RH.6–8.6, RH.6–8.9 RST.6–8.1, RST.6–8.2, RST.6–8.4, RST.6–8.7, RST.6–8.8</p>	<p><b>Science:</b> Partial alignment. The atmospheric and meteorology context fits NGSS MS-ESS2 (Earth's Systems, Grade 6); orbital mechanics fits MS-ESS1 in Grade 8.</p> <p><b>H/SS (adjacent):</b> Civil rights content sits outside Grade 6 H/SS, but HSS 6.4.8 explicitly names Hypatia among the Greek figures in arts and sciences students study. This is a Grade 6 entry point for the unit's broader inquiry into 'hidden' contributors to scientific knowledge across history.</p>	<p>Invite the science teacher to co-evaluate the research essay's use of evidence (RST.6–8.8) and source integration.</p> <p>With the SS teacher, anchor an 'unsung scientists across time' thread by pairing HSS 6.4.8 (Hypatia and other Greek figures in the sciences) with the 'hidden figures' inquiry. The same pattern of recognition gap surfaces across eras.</p>
6.4 ★	<p><b>The Lightning Thief</b></p> <p>Myths, Monsters &amp; Modern Stories (Greek and world mythology)</p> <p><b>Aligned RH / RST standards:</b> RH.6–8.2, RH.6–8.4, RH.6–8.5, RH.6–8.7 RST.6–8.2, RST.6–8.4, RST.6–8.9</p>	<p>★ <b>H/SS:</b> HSS 6.4 Ancient Greece, including 6.4.4, which explicitly names Greek mythology and Homer's Iliad/Odyssey as required Grade 6 content.</p> <p><b>Science:</b> NGSS MS-ESS2 (Earth's Systems, Grade 6) provides a backdrop for myth-as-proto-science of natural phenomena.</p>	<p>Coordinate timing with the Grade 6 SS teacher so HSS 6.4 (Ancient Greece, including Greek mythology) and the unit are taught concurrently.</p> <p>Coordinate with the science teacher to pair myth with the scientific explanation of the same natural phenomenon, a direct route to RST.6–8.9.</p>
7.1	<p><b>The Outsiders</b></p> <p>Belonging &amp; Identity (1960s social class, peer groups, empathy / compassion)</p>	<p><b>H/SS (adjacent):</b> 1960s American culture sits outside Grade 7 H/SS; however, the unit's central inquiry, how class shapes belonging, is</p>	<p>Co-plan with the Grade 7 SS teacher around comparative social structures: bring the unit alongside HSS 7.5.3 (Japan's lord-vassal system), HSS 7.6.3 (European</p>

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	<p><b>Aligned RH / RST standards:</b> RH.6–8.1, RH.6–8.2, RH.6–8.6</p>	<p>exactly what Grade 7 H/SS examines comparatively across civilizations. HSS 7.5.3 (lord-vassal system in medieval Japan: shogun, daimyo, samurai), HSS 7.6.3 (feudalism, the manor, and social hierarchy in medieval Europe), and HSS 7.7.2 (class structures in Meso-American civilizations). The unit gives the SS teacher a contemporary entry point into a comparative inquiry already on the syllabus.</p> <p><b>Science:</b> No direct Grade 7 alignment.</p>	<p>feudalism), or HSS 7.7.2 (Meso-American class structures) so students examine how class shapes belonging across civilizations and across time.</p>
7.2	<p><b>Seen and Unseen</b> Hidden Voices &amp; Civic Responsibility (Japanese American Internment, photography as testimony)</p> <p><b>Aligned RH / RST standards:</b> RH.6–8.1, RH.6–8.2, RH.6–8.6, RH.6–8.7, RH.6–8.8, RH.6–8.9 RST.6–8.4, RST.6–8.7</p>	<p><b>Media Arts:</b> Photography, composition and framing. How a photographer's choice of frame, distance, and angle shapes what a viewer sees and remembers is a direct partnership for the unit's central work with photographic testimony.</p> <p><b>H/SS (adjacent):</b> WWII content sits outside Grade 7 H/SS; however, the unit's central question (how persecution and identity are preserved in record) has strong adjacent connections. HSS 7.5.5 (Japan's golden age of literature, including Tale of Genji as a record of cultural memory) and HSS 7.9.7 (the Spanish Inquisition and the 1492 expulsion of Jews and Muslims from Spain, an instance of historical persecution and its record). Both offer Medieval-era anchors for the unit's inquiry.</p> <p><b>Science:</b> Photography science (waves/optics) fits NGSS MS-PS4 in Grade 8.</p>	<p>Invite the media arts teacher to introduce composition and framing principles students will apply to the photographs they read and curate in the Digital Witness Exhibit (Performance Task). This is direct support for RH.6–8.7 (integrating visual evidence).</p> <p>Pair with the SS teacher around HSS 7.9.7 (Spanish Inquisition and 1492 expulsion) so students examine persecution and the politics of who controls the historical record across periods; distinguishing fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment (RH.6–8.8) is the through-line.</p>
7.3	<p><b>A Raisin in the Sun</b> Dreams &amp; Opportunity (American Dream, housing segregation, FHA)</p> <p><b>Aligned RH / RST standards:</b> RH.6–8.1, RH.6–8.2, RH.6–8.6, RH.6–8.7, RH.6–8.8, RH.6–8.9 RST.6–8.7, RST.6–8.8, RST.6–8.9</p>	<p><b>Drama / Theatre Arts:</b> <i>A Raisin in the Sun</i> is a stage play, and the unit invites direct collaboration with the drama or theatre arts teacher around dramatic structure, character motivation, dialogue, staging, and performance interpretation.</p> <p><b>H/SS (adjacent):</b> HSS 7.11.4–6 traces the Enlightenment foundations of natural rights, the</p>	<p>Invite the drama or theatre arts teacher to lead a staged reading or scene-study sequence so students engage with the play as performance, not only as text. This provides direct support for character analysis and the unit's argument essay.</p> <p>Co-plan with the Grade 7 SS teacher around HSS 7.11.4–6 (Enlightenment, Locke, natural</p>

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		<p>social contract (Locke, Montesquieu), and the Magna Carta lineage that runs into the American Declaration of Independence. The Grade 7 SS teacher is teaching the philosophical scaffolding underneath 'the American Dream.' The gap the play dramatizes is between those articulated ideals and lived experience. Mid-20th-century housing policy sits outside Grade 7 H/SS.</p> <p><b>Science / Math:</b> Data interpretation is a general grade-band 6–8 math practice, not anchored to a Grade 7 NGSS topic.</p>	<p>rights) so students read <i>Raisin</i> alongside the philosophical foundations of 'the American Dream' and analyze the gap between articulated ideals and lived experience.</p> <p>Invite the math teacher to introduce one redlining/FHA data visualization that students will integrate as evidence (RH.6–8.7).</p>
<p><b>7.4</b> ★</p>	<p><b><i>Red, White, and Whole</i></b> Connections that Shape Us (biculturalism, leukemia, the circulatory system) <b>Aligned RH / RST standards:</b> RH.6–8.1, RH.6–8.2, RH.6–8.6 RST.6–8.1, RST.6–8.2, RST.6–8.4, RST.6–8.5, RST.6–8.7</p>	<p>★ <b>Science:</b> NGSS MS-LS1 From Molecules to Organisms: Structures and Processes (Grade 7). Directly aligned with the unit's content on the circulatory system, blood, and cellular function.</p> <p><b>H/SS:</b> Modern immigration sits outside Grade 7 H/SS; the content-area integration there is skills-based.</p>	<p>Coordinate timing with the Grade 7 science teacher so MS-LS1 instruction on body systems overlaps with the unit; align Tier 3 medical vocabulary (RST.6–8.4) so students encounter circulatory and cellular terms in both rooms.</p>
<p><b>8.1</b> ★</p>	<p><b><i>March: Book One</i></b> Roots &amp; Remembrance (Civil Rights, civic memory, graphic novel testimony) <b>Aligned RH / RST standards:</b> RH.6–8.1, RH.6–8.2, RH.6–8.6, RH.6–8.7, RH.6–8.8, RH.6–8.9</p>	<p>★ <b>H/SS:</b> HSS 8.9 (abolition movement), 8.10 (Civil War), and 8.11 (Reconstruction, including the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments and Jim Crow) are required Grade 8 content. <i>March: Book One</i> picks up the unfinished work of Reconstruction; direct historical-thread alignment with what the SS teacher must teach in the same year.</p>	<p>Co-plan timing with the Grade 8 SS teacher so the unit supports instruction of HSS 8.11 (Reconstruction, 13–15th Amendments, Jim Crow). Invite the SS teacher to co-evaluate the multimedia Civic Memory Brief, focusing on RH.6–8.7 and RH.6–8.9.</p>
<p><b>8.2</b></p>	<p><b><i>Animal Farm</i></b> Power, Propaganda &amp; the Art of Persuasion (revolutions, propaganda, persuasion) <b>Aligned RH / RST standards:</b> RH.6–8.2, RH.6–8.5, RH.6–8.6, RH.6–8.8, RH.6–8.9 RST.6–8.6, RST.6–8.8</p>	<p><b>H/SS (adjacent):</b> HSS 8.1 (American Revolution, philosophy of government, revolutionary fervor), HSS 8.2 (Constitutional debates over individual rights and state power), and HSS 8.3.7 (functions and responsibilities of a free press). Persuasive rhetoric in Founding-era documents and the early American debates over information, power, and dissent are direct conceptual parallels to the unit's analysis of propaganda.</p>	<p>Co-plan with the Grade 8 SS teacher when HSS 8.1–8.3 is being taught. Pair Founding-era persuasive texts (for example, Federalist or Anti-Federalist excerpts, or revolutionary pamphlets) with <i>Animal Farm</i> so that both classrooms practice RH.6–8.6 (author's purpose, loaded language) and RH.6–8.8 (fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment) on parallel material.</p>

Unit	Anchor, Topic & Aligned RH / RST Standards	Content-Area Connection (Grade-Aligned Standards)	Collaboration Opportunity
		<p>Russian/global revolutions are Grade 10 World History.</p> <p><b>Media Literacy:</b> Skills overlap on rhetorical and persuasive analysis.</p>	
<p><b>8.3</b></p> <p>★★</p>	<p><b><i>Braiding Sweetgrass (YR)</i></b></p> <p>Recovery &amp; Reciprocity (ecology, Indigenous and Western knowledge systems)</p> <p><b>Aligned RH / RST standards:</b></p> <p>RH.6–8.1, RH.6–8.6, RH.6–8.9</p> <p>RST.6–8.1, RST.6–8.2, RST.6–8.3, RST.6–8.4, RST.6–8.7, RST.6–8.8, RST.6–8.9</p>	<p>★ <b>Science:</b> NGSS MS-LS4 (Biological Evolution) and MS-ESS3 (Earth and Human Activity) are Grade 8. Directly aligned with the unit's content on ecology, biodiversity, and human impact on natural systems.</p> <p>★ <b>H/SS:</b> HSS 8.5.3 (treaties with American Indian nations), 8.8.2 (Manifest Destiny, removal of Native peoples, Trail of Tears), and 8.12.2 (federal Indian policy). Directly aligned with the unit's Indigenous-knowledge framing.</p>	<p>Coordinate a three-classroom collaboration:</p> <p>Invite the Grade 8 science teacher to consult on the research-based multimedia presentation (RST.6–8.8, RST.6–8.9).</p> <p>Invite the Grade 8 SS teacher to consult on Indigenous land policy primary sources (HSS 8.5.3, 8.8.2, 8.12.2).</p>
<p><b>8.4</b></p> <p>★</p>	<p><b><i>The Last Cuentista</i></b></p> <p>Stories for the Future (speculative fiction, interstellar travel, how the style of a story shapes the way memory holds it, and how the teen brain grows)</p> <p><b>Aligned RH / RST standards:</b></p> <p>RH.6–8.2, RH.6–8.6</p> <p>RST.6–8.1, RST.6–8.2, RST.6–8.4, RST.6–8.6, RST.6–8.8</p>	<p>★ <b>Science:</b> NGSS MS-ESS1 Earth's Place in the Universe (Grade 8). Directly aligned with the novel's interstellar-travel premise (the solar system, the scale of space, and what it means to leave Earth).</p> <p><b>Science (adjacent):</b> MS-LS1.D Information Processing (sense receptors, signals to the brain, and memory) and the overarching MS-LS1 (Structures and Processes of Organisms) standard, including how organisms grow and develop are taught earlier in the Preferred Integrated pathway. Together, they anchor the science the unit covers: how story shapes memory and the teen brain. These are earlier-grade ideas that students can be invited to return to.</p> <p><b>H/SS (adjacent):</b> HSS 8.12.7 (late-19th-century large-scale immigration; assimilation amidst growing cultural diversity). The unit's question of how cultural memory survives distance and generations connects to the Grade 8 SS teacher's work on how immigrant communities carried and adapted cultural identity.</p>	<p>Co-plan with the Grade 8 science teacher when MS-ESS1 is being taught so that students cite scale-of-universe and solar-system content as evidence grounding the novel's interstellar premise (RST.6–8.4, RST.6–8.8).</p> <p>Invite the science or health teacher to revisit earlier-grade MS-LS1 ideas on memory and adolescent brain development as students explore how the style of a story changes the way it lives in the teen brain.</p> <p>With the SS teacher, connect the unit's question of how cultural memory survives distance to HSS 8.12.7.</p>



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