



## Grade 7 Strategic Reading

### Text Selections & Complexity

Unit 1: Belonging & Identity: Social Life, Empathy & Perspective | *The Outsiders*

Unit 2: Witness, Testimony & Argument: Reading the Historical Record | *Seen and Unseen*

Unit 3: Dreams & Barriers: Researching Opportunity in America | *A Raisin in the Sun*

Unit 4: Connections that Shape Us: Family, Culture & Identity | *Red, White, and Whole*

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## Text Selection Philosophy

Newsela *Threads & Themes's* Grade 7 curriculum is built on the conviction that every student deserves access to rich, complex, and culturally affirming texts, and the structured support to read them with increasing independence. This document details how all four Grade 7 units curate, sequence, and scaffold their reading selections to meet the text selection and complexity standards outlined in the California ELA/ELD Framework.

The four anchor texts: *The Outsiders* (Hinton), *Seen and Unseen* (Partridge & Tamaki), *A Raisin in the Sun* (Hansberry), and *Red, White, and Whole* (LaRocca), span a classic novel, graphic nonfiction, drama, and a verse novel. The program balances literary and informational text across the year, with each unit pairing its anchor with short-form informational texts, poetry, primary sources, speeches, archival documents, and photo essays.

### Path of Text Complexity

*Threads & Themes* considers both the **quantitative** and **qualitative measures** described in Appendix A of the CCSS:

#### Quantitative (QT)

Lexile band for Grade 6–8: 925L–1185L. Grade 7 anchors range from 780L (*The Outsiders*) to GN-level (*Seen and Unseen*). Two anchors—*A Raisin in the Sun* (drama) and *Red, White, and Whole* (verse)—are not Lexile-measurable. Qualitative demands compensate where Lexile falls below band or is not applicable.

#### Qualitative (QL)

Structural and stylistic complexity, layers of meaning, and knowledge demands. All four anchors rate Middle High to High overall, with different primary drivers: knowledge and meaning (*The Outsiders*), structure and knowledge (*Seen and Unseen*), language and meaning (*A Raisin in the Sun*), and language and structure (*Red, White, and Whole*). See Appendices A–D for full analyses.

*(Qualitative rubric dimensions adapted from Student Achievement Partners' Qualitative Measures Rubrics; [achievethecore.org](http://achievethecore.org))*

## Grade 7 Anchor Text Progression

Grade 7 sequences anchor texts from an accessible classic novel (780L) through graphic nonfiction and then into two forms, drama and verse, that are not Lexile-measurable but carry the highest qualitative demands of the year. *The Outsiders* provides an accessible entry point for seventh graders, *Seen and Unseen* introduces multimodal complexity through graphic nonfiction, *A Raisin in the Sun* demands sophisticated dramatic and rhetorical interpretation, and *Red, White, and Whole* requires close reading of poetic craft, white space, and cultural symbolism.

Unit	Anchor Text	Author	Lexile	Qualitative	Genre	Type
1	<i>The Outsiders</i>	S.E. Hinton	780L	Mid-High (Mean/Know)	Novel	L
2	<i>Seen and Unseen</i>	Partridge & Tamaki	GN	High (Struct/Know)	Graphic Nonfiction	I
3	<i>A Raisin in the Sun</i>	Lorraine Hansberry	N/A*	High (Lang/Mean)	Drama	L
4	<i>Red, White, and Whole</i>	Rajani LaRocca	N/A*	Mid-High (Lang/Struct)	Verse Novel	L

\**A Raisin in the Sun* and *Red, White, and Whole* are drama and verse forms not captured by Lexile. Their qualitative complexity—particularly in language and structure—exceeds typical grade-level prose.

Every anchor text has been evaluated using both quantitative and qualitative measures. Where Lexile falls below band (*The Outsiders* at 780L) or is not applicable (drama, verse, graphic formats), qualitative complexity compensates. Scaffolding strategies vary by unit: Unit 1 uses historical context articles and stereotype analysis; Unit 2 provides archival documents and photojournalism analysis; Unit 3 includes redlining articles, speeches, and historical photographs; Unit 4 offers science articles, cross-cultural identity texts, and poetry close reading.

Every student reads the full anchor text without abridgment across all four units. Differentiation occurs through paired texts, graphic organizers, collaborative discussion protocols, and integrated ELD supports—not through text replacement. The program ensures that English learners, students with disabilities, and students reading below grade level encounter the same grade-level texts with structured support.

Grade 7 includes 36 short-form texts across the four units spanning poetry, essays, speeches, nonfiction articles, archival documents, photo essays, and short fiction. Each unit's Short-Form Text Inventory (see unit sections below) details every selection with its genre, Lexile, qualitative complexity rating, close reading purpose, and lesson placement. Short-form texts are sequenced to serve two distinct functions: (1) background knowledge building in the Spark phase and (2) close reading and cross-textual analysis in the Investigation phases.

Grade 7 offers complete works across four genres: a novel (*The Outsiders*, ~192 pages), a graphic nonfiction book (*Seen and Unseen*, ~80 pages), a full-length play (*A Raisin in the Sun*, ~151 pages), and a verse novel (*Red, White, and Whole*, ~288 pages). Poetry selections appear as complete poems. Each unit's independent reading program offers 10 curated full-length titles at a range of complexity levels.

All four units center diverse voices and relevant themes: working-class youth culture and social belonging (Unit 1), Japanese American internment and civic witness (Unit 2), systemic racism and deferred dreams (Unit 3), and bicultural identity and family connection (Unit 4). Genres span a classic novel, graphic nonfiction, drama, and verse—ensuring every student finds entry points that connect to their interests while building cumulative knowledge across the year.

# Teacher Background for Text Selections

GRADE 7 • UNIT 7.1 Contemporary ELA, Narrative + Reflective Discussion

## *The Outsiders*

by S. E. Hinton

### AT A GLANCE

LEXILE	780L
GENRE / TYPE	Novel · Literary (L)
ERA / SETTING	Mid-1960s, Tulsa, Oklahoma
AUTHOR IDENTITY	White American (born and based in Tulsa, OK; published the novel at age 18 under initials)
MAIN CHARACTERS	White American working-class teenage boys (greasers) and white wealthy teenagers (Socs)
QT COMPLEXITY	Mid-High (Meaning/Knowledge)

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Susan Eloise Hinton was born in 1948 in Tulsa, Oklahoma. She drafted *The Outsiders* as a sophomore at Will Rogers High School and finished it at sixteen; it was published in 1967, when she was eighteen. Her publisher used the initials S. E. so that male reviewers would not dismiss a book about working-class teenage boys written by a teenage girl. *The Outsiders* is widely credited with launching contemporary young adult literature. Hinton went on to write *That Was Then, This Is Now*, *Rumble Fish*, *Tex*, and *Taming the Star Runner*. She earned a BA in education from the University of Tulsa in 1970. In 1988 she received the inaugural Margaret A. Edwards Award for her lifetime contribution to YA literature, with *The Outsiders* singled out among her novels. She was inducted into the Oklahoma Writers Hall of Fame in 1998.

### CONTENT OVERVIEW

*The Outsiders* runs twelve chapters narrated by fourteen-year-old Ponyboy Curtis, whose final assignment for English class turns out to be the book itself. The novel is set in 1960s Tulsa, Oklahoma, and follows the working-class greasers and their feud with the wealthy Socs. Chapters 1–3 introduce Ponyboy, his orphaned older brothers Darry and Sodapop, and the rest of the gang (Two-Bit, Steve, Dally Winston, and the quiet, abused Johnny Cade). They also trace Ponyboy's unexpected drive-in conversation with Soc cheerleader Cherry Valance, who tells him "things are rough all over." Chapters 4–6 pivot on the central crisis: cornered by drunk Socs in the park, Johnny stabs and kills Bob to save Ponyboy from being drowned in the fountain. The boys flee to an abandoned church on Jay Mountain, cut and bleach Ponyboy's hair, read *Gone with the Wind* aloud, and recite Robert Frost's "Nothing Gold Can Stay." When the church catches fire with children inside, both boys run in to save them. Chapters 7–10 cover the hospital aftermath, Randy's confession that the cycle of violence is futile, the rumble in the lot, Johnny's death, and Dally's suicide-by-cop with an unloaded gun. Chapters 11–12 trace Ponyboy's recovery, the court hearing that keeps the brothers together, Sodapop's breakdown, and Johnny's final letter urging Ponyboy to "stay gold," the prompt that becomes the novel itself.

### MAJOR THEMES & BIG IDEAS

Class conflict, brotherhood and chosen family, identity beyond stereotype, the loss of innocence, and the way young people inherit conflicts they did not start. Embedded references to Robert Frost's "Nothing Gold Can Stay" and *Gone with the Wind* support rich intertextual analysis.

### WHY THIS TEXT FITS THE UNIT

Unit 7.1 launches the Grade 7 arc on belonging and witness through reflective narrative. The unit performance task asks students to write a reflective narrative about a time they felt like an outsider or about a moment when empathy helped them connect across a divide, and to close with an author's note that links their personal experience to *The Outsiders*. As a first-person narrative written by a teenager about teenagers, the novel is a clear mentor text for reflective voice, internal narration, and the analytical work of seeing oneself in literature.

### CONTENT NOTES FOR TEACHERS

Preview before teaching: gang violence (fights, knife wound, a death in self-defense), grief and the death of a young character, a fatal police shooting, parental loss, underage smoking and drinking, and period-accurate masculinity. The novel handles its violence with restraint, but several scenes can land hard. Plan structured processing time and a clear classroom agreement before reading the church fire and rumble chapters.

## *Seen and Unseen: What Dorothea Lange, Toyo Miyatake, and Ansel Adams's Photographs Reveal About the Japanese American Incarceration*

by Elizabeth Partridge & Lauren Tamaki

### AT A GLANCE

LEXILE	990L
GENRE / TYPE	Graphic Nonfiction · Informational (I)
ERA / SETTING	1941–1945, World War II United States; ten War Relocation Authority camps including Tanforan and Manzanar
AUTHOR IDENTITY	Partridge: white American (Berkeley, CA; goddaughter of Dorothea Lange). Tamaki: Japanese Canadian illustrator (paternal Japanese, maternal Egyptian-Ukrainian).
MAIN CHARACTERS	Japanese American incarcerated (Issei and Nisei generations); three photographers, two white (Lange, Adams) and one Japanese American (Toyo Miyatake)
QT COMPLEXITY	High (Structure/Knowledge)

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Elizabeth Partridge was born in 1951 and grew up in Berkeley, California. Her godmother was the photographer Dorothea Lange. Partridge earned a BA in Women's Studies at UC Berkeley and practiced acupuncture for more than twenty years before writing full-time. Her books include *Restless Spirit: The Life and Work of Dorothea Lange*, *This Land Was Made for You and Me: The Life and Songs of Woody Guthrie*, *Marching for Freedom*, and *Boots on the Ground*. Lauren Tamaki is a Canadian illustrator of Japanese (paternal) and Egyptian-Ukrainian (maternal) descent. She studied at Alberta University of the Arts in Calgary, and her editorial illustration appears regularly in *The New York Times*, *The New Yorker*, and *Vanity Fair*. *Seen and Unseen* is her first major children's book and reflects her own family's history with Japanese-Canadian internment. The book won the 2023 Sibert Medal, a Boston Globe-Horn Book Honor, and an Orbis Pictus Honor.

### CONTENT OVERVIEW

*Seen and Unseen* is organized into six chronological sections plus extensive back matter. It traces the World War II incarceration of Japanese Americans through the lenses of three photographers. Opening pages define the Issei and Nisei generations and map the ten War Relocation Authority camps. Section 1 covers December 7, 1941, the FBI roundups, and Executive Order 9066, and explicitly corrects the government's euphemisms ("evacuation," "relocation centers") with truthful language. Section 2 follows Dorothea Lange, hired by the WRA in 1942 to document the forced removal; her photographs of Tanforan Assembly Center are stamped "impounded" by Major Beasley and buried for the duration of the war. Section 3 follows Lange to Manzanar, where guards forbid her from photographing towers, fences, or showers. Section 4 turns to imprisoned photographer Toyo Miyatake, who smuggles a lens into camp, has a friend build a hidden wooden camera, and secretly documents what Lange could not, including the December 1942 Manzanar Riot, in which a teenager is killed by military police, and the loyalty questionnaire that splits families. Section 5 introduces Ansel Adams, whose 1943 photographs deliberately exclude the barbed wire and pose smiling Nisei to argue for their patriotism. Section 6 covers the camps' closing in 1945. Back matter includes essays on language, citizenship, *Korematsu v. United States*, the model minority myth, and biographies of all three photographers.

### MAJOR THEMES & BIG IDEAS

Civil injustice and government accountability, primary sources and authorship, perspective in storytelling, art as witness and resistance, Japanese American history, and the difference between propaganda and documentation.

### WHY THIS TEXT FITS THE UNIT

Unit 7.2 is a multimodal documentary unit. The unit performance task asks students to build a Digital Witness Exhibit that responsibly tells an often-overlooked story from the Japanese American incarceration experience. Students choose two or three photographs or illustrations, pair them with a quotation, letter excerpt, or oral-history testimony, conduct a brief research step to find one credible corroborating or challenging source, and write captions and a narration script. *Seen and Unseen* is a working model of every move in the task: image-and-testimony pairing, ethical interpretation, and the integration of visual evidence into argument.

## CONTENT NOTES FOR TEACHERS

Preview before teaching: forced incarceration; racism and racial slurs (period-accurate, in cited primary sources); family separation; dehumanizing government policy; war; and the long aftermath of trauma. Some images depict armed guards and degrading conditions. Many students may have lived family histories tied to this period; consider community connections and pacing for classroom processing.

GRADE 7 • UNIT 7.3 Canonical ELA: Research and Argumentative Analytical Writing

## A Raisin in the Sun

by Lorraine Hansberry

### AT A GLANCE

LEXILE	NP (drama; no standard Lexile)
GENRE / TYPE	Drama · Literary (L)
ERA / SETTING	Late 1940s to 1959 (left unspecified between WWII and the play's 1959 premiere), Chicago South Side
AUTHOR IDENTITY	Black / African American (born Chicago, IL; daughter of plaintiff in the Supreme Court case <i>Hansberry v. Lee</i> )
MAIN CHARACTERS	Black / African American working-class family (the Youngers); brief white character (Karl Lindner); Nigerian student (Joseph Asagai)
QT COMPLEXITY	High (Language/Meaning)

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lorraine Vivian Hansberry was born on May 19, 1930, in Chicago. Her father, Carl Hansberry, was the named plaintiff in *Hansberry v. Lee* (1940), the U.S. Supreme Court decision that overturned a restrictive racial covenant on procedural grounds and allowed the Hansberrys to remain in their Woodlawn home. Lorraine attended Englewood High School and the University of Wisconsin–Madison. She moved to New York City in 1950 and joined Paul Robeson's progressive Black newspaper, *Freedom*, as a writer and associate editor. *A Raisin in the Sun*, her first play, opened on Broadway in 1959. She was the first Black woman to have a play produced on Broadway and, at twenty-nine, the youngest American to win the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award for Best Play. She participated in James Baldwin's 1963 meeting with Robert F. Kennedy, supported the Pan-African and anti-colonial movements, and continued writing until her death from pancreatic cancer in 1965 at thirty-four.

### CONTENT OVERVIEW

*A Raisin in the Sun* unfolds across three acts: Act I in two scenes, Act II in three scenes, and a single Act III. The play takes place entirely in the cramped Younger family apartment on Chicago's South Side. Act I, Scene 1 establishes the family on the morning a \$10,000 life insurance check is expected following the death of Walter Sr. Walter Lee dreams of investing it in a liquor store with his friend Willy Harris; his sister Beneatha plans to use part of it for medical school; his wife Ruth privately suspects she is pregnant; and matriarch Lena ("Mama") tends a struggling potted plant on the windowsill. Scene 2 brings the check, the visit of Beneatha's Nigerian suitor Joseph Asagai, and the revelation that Ruth is considering an abortion. Act II, Scene 1 introduces the wealthy assimilationist George Murchison and Mama's announcement that she has bought a house in all-white Clybourne Park. Scene 2 sees Mama entrust Walter with the remaining money. Scene 3 brings the Welcoming Committee's Karl Lindner, who offers to buy the house back, and the catastrophic news that Willy has fled with the family's investment. Act III tracks the family's lowest moment and Walter's transformation: planning to grovel before Lindner, he instead refuses the offer in front of his son Travis. The Youngers move out, plant in hand. The title comes from Langston Hughes's poem "Harlem."

### MAJOR THEMES & BIG IDEAS

Deferred dreams, racial discrimination and housing segregation, family and intergenerational responsibility, Black womanhood across generations, Pan-Africanism and African identity (through Asagai), and the difference between assimilation and self-determination.

### WHY THIS TEXT FITS THE UNIT

Unit 7.3 is a research and argument unit. The unit performance task asks students to choose a topic such as education, housing, employment, citizenship, or healthcare; research a specific barrier limiting opportunity in that area; and build an argument essay with a clear claim, evidence from at least two credible sources, a counterclaim, a rebuttal, and a closing

call to action. *A Raisin in the Sun* gives students the historical foundation: redlining, restrictive covenants, the Great Migration, and *Hansberry v. Lee*. It is both literature and civic comment, supporting analytical writing on character and conflict and providing a clear precedent for how families and communities respond to systemic barriers.

### CONTENT NOTES FOR TEACHERS

Preview before teaching: a candid discussion of abortion (Ruth considers ending a pregnancy); racial slurs and racist housing policy in dialogue; alcohol misuse (Walter); references to a stillbirth; and period-accurate gender dynamics. Asagai's monologue about colonialism and African independence benefits from front-loaded historical context. Many students will encounter the word "assimilationism" for the first time.

GRADE 7 · UNIT 7.4 Science-Integrated ELA: Literary Analysis & Poetry

## Red, White, and Whole

by Rajani LaRocca

### AT A GLANCE

LEXILE	NP (verse novel; no standard Lexile)
GENRE / TYPE	Verse Novel · Literary (L)
ERA / SETTING	1983, a small midwestern American city
AUTHOR IDENTITY	Indian American (born Bangalore, India; raised primarily in Louisville, KY; physician)
MAIN CHARACTERS	Indian American adolescent (Reha) and family; multiracial classmates and a white love interest (Pete); aunt visiting from Bangalore
QT COMPLEXITY	Mid-High (Language/Structure)

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rajani LaRocca was born in Bangalore, India and immigrated to the United States as a baby. She grew up primarily in Louisville, Kentucky, and earned her AB at Harvard College and her MD at Harvard Medical School. She completed her internal medicine residency at Massachusetts General Hospital and works as a primary-care internist in eastern Massachusetts. Her published work for young readers includes *Midsummer's Mayhem*, *Red, White, and Whole*, *Much Ado About Baseball*, *Where Three Oceans Meet*, and *I'll Go and Come Back*. *Red, White, and Whole* received the 2022 Newbery Honor, the Walter Dean Myers Award (Younger Readers), the Golden Kite Award (Middle Grade Fiction), the New England Book Award, and a Boston Globe-Horn Book Honor. She is active in the We Need Diverse Books community and co-hosts the podcast *STEM Women in KidLit*. As a physician-writer, she pays particular attention to medical accuracy in stories that involve illness, and to the emotional truth of children whose lives intersect with hospitals.

### CONTENT OVERVIEW

*Red, White, and Whole* is a novel-in-verse of one hundred and eighteen short titled poems tracing one transformative year in the life of thirteen-year-old Reha, an Indian American girl living in a small midwestern city in 1983. The opening poems establish Reha's central conflict, feeling split between her Indian home life and her American school life, and seed the imagery of blood, color, and celestial bodies that recur throughout. Early sections introduce her parents (her mother, Amma, who works in a hospital hematology lab; her engineer father), her best friends Sunny and Rachel, and a quiet attraction to a classmate named Pete that grows through their English class "heroes" project. The middle of the book hits a turning point during Reha's first school dance, where Pete asks her to dance and they hold hands, only for Reha to learn that Amma has collapsed and been hospitalized with acute myeloid leukemia. The remaining poems trace Amma's chemotherapy, Reha's bargaining with virtue and self-denial, the unsuccessful search for a bone marrow donor, and the arrival of Amma's sister Prema Auntie from Bangalore. Interwoven throughout are five installments of the Hindu legend of Savitri, who outwits Lord Yama for her husband's life. After Amma's death, Reha receives an aerogramme her mother wrote to be delivered a month later, telling her she belongs fully to both of her worlds.

### MAJOR THEMES & BIG IDEAS

Bicultural identity and code-switching, mother-daughter relationships, illness and grief, the science of blood and medicine, music as belonging, and the way adolescents construct selves out of competing inheritances.

### WHY THIS TEXT FITS THE UNIT

Unit 7.4 is a science-integrated literary analysis and poetry unit. The unit performance task asks students to write a multi-paragraph literary analysis explaining how one of LaRocca's poems uses imagery or symbolism to reveal meaning, then to write an original poem about a connection in their own lives that uses at least one craft move from the unit, and to close with an author's note. *Red, White, and Whole* gives students sustained instruction in line break, white space, repetition, juxtaposition, and figurative language while modeling how poetry can carry science (blood typing, bone marrow transplantation, oncology) and identity at the same time.

#### **CONTENT NOTES FOR TEACHERS**

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Preview before teaching: a parent's cancer diagnosis, treatment, and the emotional weight of waiting for a bone marrow donor; references to the parent's death; microaggressions at school; period-specific cultural detail (1983, MTV, Madonna) that may need light scaffolding. Students benefit from explicit instruction in reading poetry slowly and from front-loaded support on Hindu mythology (the Savitri frame).

# Unit 1: Belonging & Identity: Social Life, Empathy & Perspective

**Anchor Text:** *The Outsiders* by S.E. Hinton | 780L

**Essential Questions:**

“How do relationships and communities shape a person’s sense of belonging and identity?”

“What helps people navigate conflicts between groups?”

## Short-Form Close-Reading Schedule

#	Title / Author	Genre	QT (Lexile)	Type	QL	Close Reading Purpose	Lesson
1	“A Decade of Change: The 1960s in America” <i>Standard News Bureau</i>	Nonfiction	1150L	I	Mid- High	The turbulent decade of the 1960s; tracing the Civil Rights Movement, the Vietnam War, and the counterculture that reshaped America	L1
2	“Cool, Chrome and Rock ‘n’ Roll: America after World War II” <i>Standard News Bureau</i>	Photo Essay	940L	I	Mid High	Visual primary source; 1960s culture and imagery	L1
3	“Who’s Poor in America? 50 years into the ‘War on Poverty,’ a data portrait” <i>Pew Research Center</i>	Nonfiction	1180L	I	Mid-High	Data literacy and cross-disciplinary reading; comparing 1960s poverty to contemporary inequality	L2
4	“Why Stereotypes Should Be Avoided” <i>Standard News Bureau</i>	Nonfiction	970L	I	Mid-High	Connecting anchor text to middle school reality; bridge to sociology	L6
5	“What Is Social Identity?” <i>Standard News Bureau</i>	Nonfiction	1060L	I	Mid-High	Building conceptual vocabulary for identity analysis; framework applied to anchor characters	L8
6	“Nothing Gold Can Stay” <i>Robert Frost</i>	Poetry	N/A	L	High	Figurative density; loss of innocence; direct allusion in anchor; extended close reading with annotation	L14, L15, L30
7	“Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs” <i>Standard News Bureau</i>	Nonfiction	1100L	I	Mid-High	Psychology framework; analyzing Ponyboy’s and other characters’ motivations through Maslow’s lens	L27
8	“Overcoming the ‘Us’ vs. ‘Them’ Mentality” <i>Standard News Bureau</i>	Nonfiction	950L	I	Mid-High	Synthesis; applying intergroup conflict research to the novel’s central tensions	L29

**Sequencing rationale:** Short-form texts open the unit with historical context (L1–L2) that grounds students in the 1960s social landscape before they encounter the anchor. Mid-unit texts (L6–L8) build conceptual frameworks for analyzing stereotypes and identity. The Frost poem (L14–15) arrives at the novel’s emotional and thematic core. Late-unit texts (L22–25) provide psychological and sociological lenses for synthesis and cross-textual analysis.

## Independent Reading Selections

#	Title / Author	Lexile	Genre	Complexity (QT / QL)
1	<b>Ghost</b> Jason Reynolds	730L	Fiction	QT: Below band (730L)   QL: Mid-High
2	<b>Apple in the Middle</b> Dawn Quigly	640L	Novel	QT: Below band (640L)   QL: Mid-High
3	<b>Each Tiny Spark</b> Pablo Cartaya	640L	Novel	QT: Below band (640L)   QL: Mid-High
4	<b>Stargirl</b> Jerri Spinelli	590L	Novel	QT: Below band (590L)   QL: Mid-High
5	<b>The House on Mango Street</b> Sandra Cisneros	870L	Fiction	QT: Approaching band (870L)   QL: Mid-High
6	<b>Clean Getaway</b> Nic Stone	610L	Novel	QT: Below band (610L)   QL: Mid-High
7	<b>Restart</b> Gordon Korman	690L	Fiction	QT: Below band (690L)   QL: Mid-High
8	<b>The Someday Birds</b> Sally J. Pla	570L	Novel	QT: Below band (570L)   QL: Mid-High
9	<b>Millicent Min, Girl Genius</b> Lisa Yee	700L	Novel	QT: Below band (700L)   QL: Mid-High
10	<b>Me and Marvin Gardens</b> A.S. King	600L	Novel	QT: Below band (600L)   QL: Mid-High
11	<b>The Parker Inheritance</b> Varian Johnson	760L	Fiction	QT: Below band (760L)   QL: Mid-High
12	<b>Pygmalion (Drama)</b> George Bernard Shaw	990L	Science Fiction	QT: In band (990L)   QL: Mid-High
13	<b>Hey, Kiddo (GN)</b> Jarrett J. Krosoczka	GN: 510L	Graphic Memoir	QT: Below band (GN: 510L, graphic format)   QL: Mid-High
14	<b>Brown Girl Dreaming</b> Jacqueline Woodson	990L	Verse Novel / Memoir	QT: In band (990L)   QL: High
15	<b>I Am Malala</b> Malala Yousafzai with Christina Lamb	1000L	Memoir	QT: In band (1000L)   QL: Mid-High
16	<b>Almost American Girl (GN)</b> Robin Ha	GN: ~300L	Graphic Memoir	QT: Below band (GN: ~300L, graphic format)   QL: Mid-High
17	<b>The 57 Bus</b> Dashka Slater	930L	Fiction	QT: In band (930L)   QL: Mid-High

Best for Home / Independent

Best for Classroom (Teacher-Supported)

Full novel; Newsela articles; identity-focused IR selections with moderate qualitative demands

Anchor chapters with teacher modeling; Frost poetry close reading; Staples essay analysis; video and photo primary sources

## Unit 2: Witness, Testimony & Argument: Reading the Historical Record

**Anchor Text:** *Seen and Unseen* by Elizabeth Partridge & Lauren Tamaki | 990L

**Essential Questions:**

*“How do we decide whose stories are remembered?”*

*“How can listening to witnesses change the way we understand history?”*

### Short-Form Close-Reading Schedule

#	Title / Author	Genre	QT (Lexile)	Type	QL	Close Reading Purpose	Lesson
1	<b>“Before Pearl Harbor, L.A. Was Home to Thriving Japanese Communities”</b> <i>Patt Morrison, Los Angeles Times</i>	Nonfiction	1250L	I	Mid-High	Pre-internment context; building background knowledge about Japanese American communities before WWII	L1
2	<b>“Daily Life on the Homefront”</b> <i>Dorothea Lange, Oakland Museum of California</i>	Visual Primary Source	N/A	I	Mid-High	Visual primary source analysis; understanding the WWII homefront context before anchor reading	L1
3	<b>“I Am an American”</b> <i>Library of Congress</i>	Visual Primary Source	N/A	I	Mid-High	Visual primary source analysis; builds students' understanding of historical witness	L2
4	<b>“Powers of Persuasion”</b> <i>National Archives</i>	Visual Primary Source	1450L	I	High	Opportunity to build critical media literacy that names propaganda as a tool of power	L2
5	<b>“In Response to Executive Order 9066”</b> <i>Dwight Okita</i>	Poetry	N/A	L	High	Close reading of irony, child's voice, and injustice; poetic response to government action	L3
6	<b>“Exposing Injustice: Incarceration of Japanese Americans”</b> <i>Dorothea Lange Digital Archive at the Oakland Museum of California</i>	Nonfiction	1060L	I	Mid-High	Knowledge-building set that synthesizes the ideas of the unit.	L3, L22, L23
7	<b>“Photos: 3 Very Different Views of Japanese Internment”</b> <i>NPR</i>	Photo Essay	1220L	I	High	Competing visual narratives; analyzing bias, framing, and purpose in documentary photography	L4

8	<b>“Instructions to All Persons of Japanese Ancestry”</b> <i>National Parks Service</i>	Archival Document	N/A	I	High	Primary source analysis; close reading of bureaucratic language as instrument of injustice	L5, L6, L7
9	<b>“A Picture Is Worth a Thousand Words: Why Photojournalism Matters Now More Than Ever”</b> <i>Justin Aitken, The Photography Institute</i>	Nonfiction	1290L	I	Mid-High	Metacognitive reading about photojournalism and the ethics of witness; synthesizing across unit texts	L11
10	<b>“Statement of United States Citizen of Japanese Ancestry (loyalty questionnaire)”</b> <i>Densho</i>	Primary Source Document /image	N/A	I	N/A	Images of the “Statement of United States Citizen of Japanese Ancestry” form	L12
11	<b>“The ‘Loyalty Questionnaire’ of 1943 Opened a Wound That Has Yet to Heal”</b> <i>Natasha Varner</i>	Primary Source Document	1350L	I	High	Analysis to examine how stigma within marginalized communities can persist long after the original injustice	L13
12	<b>Excerpt from “Bearing Witness and Creative Activism”</b> <i>Sondra Bacharach</i>	Academic journal article excerpt	1510L	I	High	Teacher read-aloud; provides students with academic vocabulary for the unit's central concept; Empowers students to name what they observe in the unit's other texts	L14
13	<b>“Surviving Poston’s Desert Heat: Cellars, Fans, Ponds, and Gardens”</b> <i>Roy Kakuda</i>	Photo and essay	111)L	I	Middle	Centers a Japanese American survivor's own story in retrospective first person.	L15, L34
14	<b>“Letter from Mary Tsukamoto to “Richard,” Soldier in the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, October 21, 1943”</b> <i>California State University Department of Special Collections</i>	Primary Source Document	1140L	I	High	Primary source correspondence; Explores power, equity, justice, and injustice through explicit contradiction	L17
15	<b>“Letter to Clara Breed from Fusa Tsumagari, Poston, Arizona, October 9, 1942”</b> <i>Japanese American National Museum</i>	Primary Source Document	780L	I	Middle	Knowledge-building about the geography and texture of the camp system; Introduces Clara Breed as an example of allyship.	L32, L34

**Sequencing rationale:** Short-form texts open with pre-war context (L1) to establish what Japanese American communities looked like before Executive Order 9066. The Okita poem (L2) provides an emotional entry point through a child’s perspective. Mid-unit texts (L5–L34) deepen primary source analysis skills with increasingly complex archival materials. The photojournalism article (L11) provides a metacognitive capstone on how visual witness functions.

### Independent Reading Selections

#	Title / Author	Lexile	Genre	Complexity (QT / QL / RT)
1	<b>We Are Not Free</b> <i>Traci Chow</i>	860L	Fiction	QT: Approaching band (860L)   QL: Mid-High
2	<b>Refugee</b> <i>Alan Gratz</i>	800L	Fiction	QT: Below band (800L)   QL: Mid-High (contemporary themes, character voice)
3	<b>Prisoner B-3087</b> <i>Alan Gratz</i>	760L	Novel	QT: Below band (760L)   QL: Mid-High
4	<b>Number the Stars</b> <i>Lois Lowry</i>	670L	Fiction	QT: Below band (670L)   QL: Mid-High
5	<b>The Breadwinner</b> <i>Deborah Ellis</i>	710L	Fiction	QT: Below band (710L)   QL: Mid-High (contemporary themes, character voice)
6	<b>They Called Us Enemy (GN)</b> <i>George Takei, Justin Eisinger &amp; Steven Scott</i>	GN: 680L	Graphic Memoir	QT: Below band (GN: 680L, graphic format)   QL: Mid-High (visual-verbal integration)
7	<b>When Stars Are Scattered (GN)</b> <i>Victoria Jamieson &amp; Omar Mohamed</i>	GN: 530L	Graphic Memoir	QT: Below band (GN: 530L, graphic format)   QL: Mid-High (visual-verbal integration)
8	<b>The Unwanted: Stories of the Syrian Refugees (GN)</b> <i>Don Brown</i>	GN: 860L	Fiction	QT: Below band (GN: 860L, graphic format)   QL: Mid-High
9	<b>Unbroken (Young Adult Adaptation)</b> <i>Laura Hillenbrand</i>	850L	Nonfiction	QT: Approaching band (850L)   QL: Mid-High
10	<b>Bomb</b> <i>Steve Sheinkin</i>	920L	Fiction	QT: Approaching band (920L)   QL: Mid-High
11	<b>Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass</b> <i>Frederick Douglass</i>	1080L	Biography	QT: In band (1080L)   QL: Mid-High

Best for Home / Independent	Best for Classroom (Teacher-Supported)
Full graphic nonfiction text; Newsela articles; graphic novel IR selections ( <i>They Called Us Enemy, When Stars Are Scattered</i> )	Anchor with guided visual-verbal analysis; poetry close reading; archival document analysis; photo essay comparison; ELD visual supports

## Unit 3: Dreams & Barriers: Researching Opportunity in America

**Anchor Text:** *A Raisin in the Sun* by Lorraine Hansberry | NP (Drama)

**Essential Questions:**

“How do dreams shape who we are, and what happens when they’re deferred?”

“How can research help us understand the systems that create or limit opportunity?”

### Short-Form Close-Reading Schedule

#	Title / Author	Genre	QT (Lexile)	Type	QL	Close Reading Purpose	Lesson
1	“Striking Black and White Photos Capture the Black Experience in 1940s South Side Chicago” <i>Edwin Rosskam, Library of Congress</i>	Photo Collection	1070L	I	Mid-High	Visual primary source analysis; establishing the physical and social setting of the Younger family’s world	L1, L2
2	“Harlem” <i>Langston Hughes</i>	Poetry	N/A	L	High	Close reading of figurative language and deferred dreams; the poem that gives the play its title	L2
3	“Black Americans and the Racist Architecture of Homeownership” <i>NPR</i>	Nonfiction	1250L	I	High	Systemic analysis of housing discrimination; highest-complexity informational text in unit; revisited across lessons	L2, L3, L4, L9, L13, L14, L29
4	“Redlining: How Housing Discrimination Shaped American Neighborhoods” <i>Standard News Bureau</i>	Nonfiction	1220L	I	Mid-High	Policy explanation connecting historical housing segregation to the Younger family’s choices	L24
5	“I Have a Dream” <i>Martin Luther King, Jr.</i>	Speech	1140L	L	High	Rhetorical analysis; tracing claims and evidence; connecting Civil Rights rhetoric to the Younger family’s aspirations	L27, L28

**Sequencing rationale:** The unit opens with visual and poetic context (L1–L2): Rosskam photographs ground students in the physical world of 1940s–50s South Side Chicago, and Hughes’ “Harlem” introduces the central metaphor of deferred dreams. The NPR homeownership article provides systemic context early and is revisited throughout the unit as understanding deepens. The MLK speech and redlining article arrive as students synthesize the play’s themes with historical evidence about systemic inequality.

### Independent Reading Selections

#	Title / Author	Lexile	Genre	Complexity (QT / QL )
1	<b>Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry</b> <i>Mildred D. Taylor</i>	920L	Novel	QT: Approaching band (920L)   QL: Mid-High

2	<b>Piecing Me Together</b> <i>Renée Watson</i>	680L	Novel	QT: Below band (680L)   QL: Mid-High
3	<b>All American Boys</b> <i>Jason Reynolds &amp; Brendan Kiely</i>	HL770 L	Fiction	QT: Below band (HL770L, high-low format)   QL: Mid-High
4	<b>Esperanza Rising</b> <i>Pam Muñoz Ryan</i>	750L	Novel	QT: Below band (750L)   QL: Mid-High
5	<b>Only Road</b> <i>Alexandra Diaz</i>	830L	Novel	QT: Approaching band (830L)   QL: Mid-High
6	<b>The Benefits of Being an Octopus</b> <i>Ann Braden</i>	770L	Novel	QT: Below band (770L)   QL: Mid-High
7	<b>We've Got a Job: The 1963 Birmingham Children's Crusade</b> <i>Cynthia Levinson</i>	1020L	Fiction	QT: In band (1020L)   QL: Mid-High
8	<b>Enrique's Journey</b> <i>Sonia Nazario</i>	770L	Fiction	QT: Below band (770L)   QL: Mid-High
9	<b>Warriors Don't Cry</b> <i>Melba Pattillo Beals</i>	1000L	Memoir	QT: In band (1000L)   QL: Mid-High
10	<b>Outcasts United</b> <i>Warren St. John</i>	980L	Nonfiction	QT: In band (980L)   QL: Mid-High

Best for Home / Independent	Best for Classroom (Teacher-Supported)
Full play; Newsela articles on redlining; IR selections ( <i>Roll of Thunder, Piecing Me Together, Brown Girl Dreaming</i> )	Dramatic reading with teacher modeling; Hughes poetry close reading; MLK speech analysis; NPR redlining deep dive; film vs. text comparison

## Unit 4: Connections that Shape Us: Family, Culture & Identity

**Anchor Text:** *Red, White, and Whole* by Rajani LaRocca | N/A (Novel in Verse)

**Essential Questions:**

“What is blood, and how does it work as a symbol of both family ties and shared humanity?”

“How do people hold on to their roots while making a home in a new place?”

### Short-Form Close-Reading Schedule

#	Title / Author	Genre	QT (Lexile)	Type	QL	Close Reading Purpose	Lesson
1	<b>“Fish Cheeks”</b> <i>Amy Tan</i>	Short Story	910L	L	Mid-High	Cultural shame and pride at a family dinner; cross-cultural comparison with anchor’s bicultural tensions	L1, L2
2	<b>“Bicultural Identity: Then &amp; Now”</b> <i>Bhavana Kunnath</i>	Nonfiction	1500L	I	Mid-High	Conceptual framework for analyzing bicultural experience; vocabulary building for identity analysis	L3, L33, L34
3	<b>“What Is Blood?”</b> <i>NIH/CDC (Newsela)</i>	Nonfiction	1030L	I	Mid-High	Science of blood and hematology; cross-disciplinary STEM reading connecting to anchor’s leukemia plot	L6, L7, L9, L22-23
4	<b>Savitri</b> <i>Newsela adaptation</i>	Story	1090L	L	Mid-High	Indian mythology and cultural heritage; love and sacrifice; connecting anchor’s Indian American identity to mythic tradition	L12
5	<b>“Search for My Tongue”</b> <i>Sujata Bhatt</i>	Poetry	N/A	L	High	Bilingual poetry; close reading of language loss, identity, and code-switching; highest-complexity short text in unit	L15, L16, L17, L18, L19, L44
6	<b>“What can go wrong with blood? An overview of anemia, bleeding, blood clotting and blood cancers.”</b> <i>National Institutes of Health (NIH)</i>	Nonfiction resource	1020L	I	Mid-Low	Knowledge-building for foundational life science; connects to health literacy, current events and lived experiences	L22, L23
7	<b>“Olympic Hopeful Works To Improve Bone Marrow Registries”</b> <i>Article</i>	Nonfiction	1310L	I	Mid-High	Real-world bone marrow science and advocacy; connecting anchor’s leukemia theme to contemporary action	L29
8	<b>“Through her grief, an Indian American photographer rediscovers her heritage”</b> <i>Maansi Srivastava</i>	Nonfiction	1100L	I	Mid-High	Bicultural grief and heritage reclamation through photography; synthesis with anchor’s themes of loss and belonging	L35, L36, L37

**Sequencing rationale:** The unit opens with Amy Tan’s “Fish Cheeks” (L2) as an accessible, emotionally resonant entry into bicultural identity before students encounter the verse novel. The bicultural identity article (L3) provides an analytical framework revisited in synthesis. Mid-unit texts build scientific context (L6) and cultural heritage (L12). Bhatt’s bilingual poem (L15) arrives at the anchor’s emotional and thematic core. Late-unit texts (L27, L33–34) connect the anchor’s personal story to real-world advocacy and heritage reclamation.

## Independent Reading Selections

#	Title / Author	Lexile	Genre	Complexity (QT / QL)
1	<b>Other Words for Home</b> <i>Jasmine Warga</i>	930L	Verse Novel	QT: In band (930L)   QL: High
2	<b>Same Sun Here</b> <i>Silas House and Neela Vaswani</i>	890L	Novel	QT: Approaching band (890L)   QL: Mid-High
3	<b>The Red Pencil</b> <i>Andrea Davis Pinkney</i>	HL620 L	Verse Novel	QT: Below band (HL620L, high-low format)   QL: High
4	<b>A Long Walk to Water</b> <i>Linda Sue Park</i>	720L	Novel	QT: Below band (720L)   QL: Mid-High
5	<b>When You Trap a Tiger</b> <i>Tae Keller</i>	590L	Novel	QT: Below band (590L)   QL: Mid-High
6	<b>Efrén Divided</b> <i>Ernesto Cisneroa</i>	710L	Novel	QT: Below band (710L)   QL: Mid-High
7	<b>Crenshaw</b> <i>Katherine Applegate</i>	540L	Novel	QT: Below band (540L)   QL: Mid-High
8	<b>Flying Lessons &amp; Other Stories</b> <i>Ellen Oh (edited by)</i>	800L	Fiction	QT: Below band (800L)   QL: Mid-High
9	<b>Love That Dog</b> <i>Sharon Creech</i>	1010L	Fiction	QT: In band (1010L)   QL: Mid-High
10	<b>The Surrender Tree</b> <i>Margarita Engle</i>	NP	Verse Novel	QT: N/A (non-prose / visual)   QL: High
11	<b>The Distance Between Us: Young Readers Edition</b> <i>Reyna Grande</i>	HL580 L	Memoir	QT: Below band (HL580L, high-low format)   QL: Mid-High
12	<b>Americanized: Rebel Without a Green Card</b> <i>Sara Saedi</i>	1030L	Memoir	QT: In band (1030L)   QL: Mid-High
13	<b>Human Body Theater</b> <i>Maris Wicks</i>	GN: 920L	Graphic Nonfiction	QT: Below band (GN: 920L, graphic format)   QL: Mid-High
14	<b>Genetics: Breaking the Code of Your DNA</b> <i>Carla Mooney</i>	1040L	Fiction	QT: In band (1040L)   QL: Mid-High
15	<b>Blood: The Stuff of Life</b> <i>Susan E. Goodman</i>	Not yet Lexile d	Nonfiction	QT: Not yet measured (Not yet Lexiled)   QL: Mid-High

Best for Home / Independent	Best for Classroom (Teacher-Supported)
Full verse novel; Newsela articles; verse novel IR selections (Other <i>Words for Home</i> , <i>The Red Pencil</i> , <i>Love That Dog</i> )	Anchor with guided verse analysis; Bhatt poetry close reading; Tan essay analysis; science article with vocabulary support; myth retelling

## Culturally Relevant Pedagogy & Text Selection

Text selections across all four Grade 7 units are grounded in Dr. Gloria Ladson-Billings’ three pillars of culturally relevant pedagogy, operationalized through the Student Achievement Partners text analysis toolkit:

Academic Success	Cultural Competence	Critical Consciousness
Every unit builds academic language, analytical reading, and content knowledge through rigorous grade-level texts with structured scaffolding. <i>The Outsiders</i> develops character analysis and social-context reading; <i>Seen and Unseen</i> builds visual literacy and primary source analysis; <i>A Raisin in the Sun</i> cultivates dramatic interpretation and argumentation; <i>Red, White, and Whole</i> deepens poetic craft analysis and cross-cultural synthesis.	Selections represent diverse identities across all units: working-class white youth navigating poverty and class (Unit 1); Japanese American families and Japanese immigrant communities during WWII (Unit 2); a Black family confronting housing segregation in 1950s Chicago (Unit 3); an Indian American girl navigating bicultural identity (Unit 4). Texts serve as mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors (Bishop, 1990).	Texts explore power, equity, and justice: Unit 1 examines class, poverty, and stereotyping through the Greasers’ lens; Unit 2 confronts Executive Order 9066 and the constitutional violation of Japanese American internment; Unit 3 directly addresses systemic racism through housing segregation, redlining, and deferred dreams; Unit 4 interrogates what it means to belong to two cultures when institutions demand assimilation.

*The qualitative analyses in Appendices A–D were conducted using the Student Achievement Partners text analysis toolkit, including the Know Yourself, Know Your Students reflection protocol, the Initial Considerations for Complexity and Cultural Relevance analysis tool, and the Qualitative Analysis Tools for literary and informational texts (achievethecore.org).*

## Appendix A: Literary Text Qualitative Analysis

*The Outsiders* by S.E. Hinton (1967) | Lexile: 780L | Novel | Literary

**Rubric format:** Student Achievement Partners (achievethecore.org). **Ratings and text-based evidence:** Newsela

MEANING			
<b>HIGH</b> Multiple levels/layers of complex meaning	<b>MIDDLE HIGH</b> ✓ Multiple levels/layers of meaning	<b>MIDDLE LOW</b> Single level of complex meaning	<b>LOW</b> Single level of simple meaning
<b>Text-Based Evidence:</b> Operates on multiple levels beneath its accessible surface narrative. The Greasers vs. Socs conflict represents class warfare, but the novel’s deeper meaning explores how empathy can transcend social division. Ponyboy’s realization that “things are rough all over” moves from cliché to earned insight. Johnny’s dying words—“Stay gold, Ponyboy”—connect to the Frost poem and the loss of innocence. The novel-as-English-assignment frame (the story IS Ponyboy’s theme paper) adds a metafictional layer about writing as survival.			
<b>Opportunities</b> Analyze dual meaning of “outsiders”; trace Ponyboy’s evolving understanding of Socs; discuss how “Stay gold” accumulates meaning; examine the metafictional frame of the novel as school assignment		<b>Cautions &amp; Support Needed</b> Surface accessibility may lead students to miss deeper layers; the “stay gold” allusion requires the Frost poem; gang violence content requires sensitive framing	

STRUCTURE			
<b>HIGH</b> Complex, implicit, unconventional structure	<b>MIDDLE HIGH</b> Some complexities; occasional shifts	<b>MIDDLE LOW</b> ✓ Largely simple, conventional	<b>LOW</b> Simple, explicit, chronological
<b>Text-Based Evidence:</b> Employs first-person retrospective narration with a circular structure: the novel’s opening line is also its closing revelation, revealing that the entire story is Ponyboy’s English theme. Largely chronological with some flashback. Single narrator with a consistent, distinctive voice. Chapter structure is conventional, building toward the church fire climax and its aftermath. The retrospective frame adds subtle complexity.			
<b>Opportunities</b> Identify the circular structure and discuss its significance; analyze how Ponyboy’s retrospective narration shapes reader understanding; compare narrative structure with other first-person novels		<b>Cautions &amp; Support Needed</b> Circular structure may not be noticed without explicit instruction; retrospective narration means Ponyboy knows more than he reveals at any given moment	

LANGUAGE			
<b>HIGH</b> Heavy figurative; unfamiliar, archaic, domain-specific	<b>MIDDLE HIGH</b> ✓ Contains figurative language; somewhat complex	<b>MIDDLE LOW</b> Subtle figurative; conversational	<b>LOW</b> Little figurative; literal
<b>Text-Based Evidence:</b>			

Written in authentic 1960s teenage vernacular—direct, colloquial, and emotionally immediate. Hinton was sixteen when she wrote the novel, and the voice reflects genuine adolescent perspective. Slang terms (tuff, savvy, hacked off) require contextual interpretation. Figurative language appears in key moments: the sunset as a symbol of shared humanity, gold as innocence, the metaphor of “looking” as understanding. The Frost poem integration elevates the linguistic register at a critical moment.

**Opportunities**

Create slang glossary; analyze how Hinton uses figurative language at turning points; compare Ponyboy’s narrative voice with his reported speech; discuss the Frost poem’s role in the novel

**Cautions & Support Needed**

1960s slang requires glossary support; some dialect may feel dated; the shift from colloquial to poetic register at key moments needs highlighting

**KNOWLEDGE**

**HIGH**

Multiple complex themes; distinctly different experiences

**MIDDLE HIGH** ✓

Multiple themes; uncommon experiences

**MIDDLE LOW**

Single complex theme; common experiences

**LOW**

Single simple theme; everyday

**Text-Based Evidence:**

Requires understanding of 1960s American class dynamics, gang culture, and social stratification. The Greasers’ poverty and the Socs’ privilege reflect real socioeconomic divides of the era. The War on Poverty, Kennedy assassination, and civil rights era form the historical backdrop. Knowledge of Robert Frost’s poetry is essential for the novel’s central symbol. Understanding of the juvenile justice system and foster care adds context.

**Opportunities**

Pre-reading: 1960s social history, class and poverty context, War on Poverty; teach “Nothing Gold Can Stay” before the novel reaches that scene; discuss youth culture and gang dynamics

**Cautions & Support Needed**

Students need 1960s historical context that is not intuitive; class dynamics may be less visible than racial dynamics to some students; gang culture content requires sensitive handling

**Qualitative Complexity Summary**

**Meaning:** Middle High — Multiple layers beneath accessible surface; empathy as central insight

**Structure:** Middle Low — First-person retrospective; circular frame; largely chronological

**Language:** Middle High — Authentic 1960s vernacular; figurative language at key moments; Frost integration

**Knowledge:** Middle High — 1960s class dynamics; gang culture; War on Poverty; Frost poem

**Overall Qualitative Rating: Middle High (3 on a 0–5 scale)**

*The Outsiders* combines an accessible, engaging voice with substantive thematic depth about class, empathy, and identity. Its Lexile (780L) falls below the Grade 6–8 quantitative band, but the qualitative complexity—particularly in meaning and knowledge demands—places it firmly at grade level. The novel’s enduring relevance to adolescent experience makes it an ideal entry point for seventh grade.

## Appendix B: Informational Text Qualitative Analysis

*Seen and Unseen* by Elizabeth Partridge & Lauren Tamaki (2023) | Graphic Nonfiction | Informational

**Rubric format:** Student Achievement Partners (achievethecore.org). **Ratings and text-based evidence:** Newsela

MEANING			
<b>HIGH</b> Multiple levels/layers of complex meaning	<b>MIDDLE HIGH</b> ✓ Multiple levels/layers of meaning	<b>MIDDLE LOW</b> Single level of complex meaning	<b>LOW</b> Single level of simple meaning
<p><b>Text-Based Evidence:</b></p> <p>The title itself carries layered meaning: Japanese Americans were “seen” as threats and “unseen” as loyal citizens and full human beings. The text explores how wartime fear, racial prejudice, and governmental power combined to erase an entire community’s rights. Multiple testimonies reveal different facets of the internment experience—loss, resilience, resistance, and the long aftermath of injustice. The deeper question: what does it mean to bear witness, and whose stories count?</p>			
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <p>Analyze the dual meaning of “seen and unseen”; trace how different testimonies reveal different aspects of the experience; discuss what “bearing witness” means in historical and personal contexts</p>		<p><b>Cautions &amp; Support Needed</b></p> <p>Students may need support recognizing the political dimensions of “visibility” and “invisibility”; wartime context and constitutional violations require careful framing</p>	

STRUCTURE			
<b>HIGH</b> ✓ Complex, implicit, unconventional structure	<b>MIDDLE HIGH</b> Some complexities; occasional shifts	<b>MIDDLE LOW</b> Largely simple, conventional	<b>LOW</b> Simple, explicit, chronological
<p><b>Text-Based Evidence:</b></p> <p>Employs a complex multimodal structure integrating Partridge’s prose narrative with Tamaki’s full-page illustrations, archival photographs, and testimony excerpts. The visual and verbal tracks operate in counterpoint—sometimes reinforcing, sometimes complicating each other. Non-linear organization moves between personal testimony, historical exposition, and visual interpretation. Readers must integrate information across multiple modes simultaneously. The graphic nonfiction format itself is structurally demanding.</p>			
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <p>Model visual-verbal integration reading strategies; analyze how illustrations add meaning beyond the text; compare visual and textual testimony; discuss how the format affects reader experience</p>		<p><b>Cautions &amp; Support Needed</b></p> <p>Students unfamiliar with graphic nonfiction need explicit instruction in multimodal reading; the counterpoint between text and image can be confusing without scaffolding; non-linear organization requires tracking multiple threads</p>	

LANGUAGE			
<b>HIGH</b> Heavy figurative; unfamiliar, archaic, domain-specific	<b>MIDDLE HIGH</b> ✓ Contains figurative language; somewhat complex	<b>MIDDLE LOW</b> Subtle figurative; conversational	<b>LOW</b> Little figurative; literal
<p><b>Text-Based Evidence:</b></p>			

Partridge’s prose is restrained and precise, allowing testimony to carry emotional weight. Government documents and official language appear alongside personal voices, creating a register contrast that highlights the dehumanization of bureaucratic power. Tamaki’s visual language—color, composition, perspective—operates as a parallel communicative system. Historical and legal vocabulary (executive order, internment, civil liberties) appears throughout.

**Opportunities**

Analyze register shifts between testimony and official language; discuss how Tamaki’s color and composition choices communicate meaning; create vocabulary glossary of historical/legal terms

**Cautions & Support Needed**

Register contrast between personal and official language needs explicit instruction; visual “language” is a new analytical mode for many students; historical vocabulary requires ongoing support

**KNOWLEDGE**

**HIGH** ✓

Multiple complex themes; distinctly different experiences

**MIDDLE HIGH**

Multiple themes; uncommon experiences

**MIDDLE LOW**

Single complex theme; common experiences

**LOW**

Single simple theme; everyday

**Text-Based Evidence:**

Demands substantial background knowledge: Pearl Harbor and U.S. entry into WWII, Executive Order 9066, the distinction between internment and incarceration, Japanese American community history before and after the war, constitutional rights and due process, the redress movement, and the broader context of wartime racism. Understanding the political and legal dimensions requires knowledge beyond typical seventh-grade experience.

**Opportunities**

Pre-reading: WWII context, Pearl Harbor, Executive Order 9066; study Japanese American community life before the war; discuss constitutional rights and when they have been suspended; connect to contemporary civil liberties debates

**Cautions & Support Needed**

Heavy scaffolding through articles, archival documents, and photographs is necessary; students need explicit instruction distinguishing internment from incarceration; the constitutional dimension requires age-appropriate legal context

**Qualitative Complexity Summary**

**Meaning:** Middle High — Layered meaning of visibility/invisibility; witness and testimony

**Structure:** High — Multimodal graphic nonfiction; visual-verbal counterpoint; non-linear

**Language:** Middle High — Register contrast (personal vs. bureaucratic); visual language system

**Knowledge:** High — WWII, internment, constitutional law, Japanese American history

**Overall Qualitative Rating: High (4 on a 0–5 scale)**

*Seen and Unseen* is the most structurally complex anchor in the Grade 7 sequence. Its graphic nonfiction format demands simultaneous visual and verbal processing, while its knowledge demands extensive background building. The combination of multimodal structure and heavy historical context makes this text appropriate for mid-year placement after students have developed analytical skills in Unit 1.

## Appendix C: Literary Text Qualitative Analysis

*A Raisin in the Sun* by Lorraine Hansberry (1959) | Drama | Literary

**Rubric format:** Student Achievement Partners (achievethecore.org). **Ratings and text-based evidence:** Newsela

MEANING			
<b>HIGH</b> ✓ Multiple levels/layers of complex meaning	<b>MIDDLE HIGH</b> Multiple levels/layers of meaning	<b>MIDDLE LOW</b> Single level of complex meaning	<b>LOW</b> Single level of simple meaning
<b>Text-Based Evidence:</b> Operates on multiple complex levels simultaneously. The title’s allusion to Hughes’ “Harlem” sets up the central question: what happens to deferred dreams? Each family member’s dream—Walter’s business ambition, Beneatha’s medical career, Mama’s house, Ruth’s stability—represents a different facet of the American Dream as experienced by a Black family in 1950s Chicago. The play examines how systemic racism (housing covenants, redlining, economic exclusion) constrains individual aspiration. Karl Lindner’s “polite” racism is more dangerous than overt hostility.			
<b>Opportunities</b> Analyze each character’s dream and what it represents; trace how systemic barriers interact with personal choices; discuss why Lindner’s scene is the play’s moral turning point; connect to Hughes’ poem		<b>Cautions &amp; Support Needed</b> Students may struggle to see Lindner’s politeness as racism; the interplay of personal and systemic barriers requires explicit instruction; some dreams (Walter’s business, Beneatha’s Africa) need cultural context	

STRUCTURE			
<b>HIGH</b> Complex, implicit, unconventional structure	<b>MIDDLE HIGH</b> ✓ Some complexities; occasional shifts	<b>MIDDLE LOW</b> Largely simple, conventional	<b>LOW</b> Simple, explicit, chronological
<b>Text-Based Evidence:</b> Three-act dramatic structure with rising action, climax, and resolution. The play unfolds in real time within the Younger apartment (unity of place), creating a claustrophobic intensity. Stage directions carry significant meaning—lighting, blocking, and character positioning communicate subtext. Dialogue drives the narrative entirely; there is no narrator. Dramatic irony operates when the audience knows more than individual characters. The structure demands theatrical reading skills.			
<b>Opportunities</b> Read scenes dramatically; analyze stage directions as meaning-making; identify dramatic irony; discuss how the single-setting intensifies conflict; compare dramatic structure with narrative fiction		<b>Cautions &amp; Support Needed</b> Drama as a form is unfamiliar to many seventh graders; stage directions are often skipped by students; reading dialogue-only text requires explicit instruction; dramatic irony needs scaffolding	

LANGUAGE			
<b>HIGH</b> ✓ Heavy figurative; unfamiliar, archaic, domain-specific	<b>MIDDLE HIGH</b> Contains figurative language; somewhat complex	<b>MIDDLE LOW</b> Subtle figurative; conversational	<b>LOW</b> Little figurative; literal
<b>Text-Based Evidence:</b>			

Hansberry’s dialogue authentically represents 1950s Black Chicago vernacular across generational registers: Mama’s Southern speech patterns, Walter’s street-inflected aspirational language, Beneatha’s educated vocabulary, and Ruth’s pragmatic directness. The play contains sustained dramatic argument—characters debate values, identity, and justice through dialogue. Rhetorical devices (repetition, parallel structure, allusion) operate throughout. Stage directions use precise, evocative language. The register shift when Lindner speaks—polite, bureaucratic—is itself a language analysis opportunity.

**Opportunities**

Compare how different characters speak and what this reveals; analyze key speeches for rhetorical devices; examine Lindner’s language as a mask for racism; discuss dialect as intentional craft

**Cautions & Support Needed**

Generational dialect differences need explicit instruction; dramatic argument is a challenging discourse mode; Hansberry’s rhetorical sophistication is easy to underestimate; some language may feel dated

**KNOWLEDGE**

**HIGH** 

Multiple complex themes; distinctly different experiences

**MIDDLE HIGH**

Multiple themes; uncommon experiences

**MIDDLE LOW**

Single complex theme; common experiences

**LOW**

Single simple theme; everyday

**Text-Based Evidence:**

Demands extensive historical and cultural knowledge: the Great Migration and its aftermath, 1950s housing segregation and restrictive covenants, redlining and its economic impact, the Civil Rights movement’s early stages, Black middle-class aspiration in postwar America, Pan-Africanism and its appeal (Beneatha’s interest in Asagai), and the specific social geography of Chicago’s South Side. The play also requires understanding of dramatic conventions and theatrical performance.

**Opportunities**

Pre-reading: South Side Chicago photographs, redlining articles, housing discrimination history; study the Great Migration; discuss the American Dream across cultures; introduce dramatic conventions and theatrical reading

**Cautions & Support Needed**

Knowledge demands are the highest of any Grade 7 anchor; students need substantial scaffolding across history, economics, and dramatic form; connections to contemporary housing inequality help bridge historical distance

**Qualitative Complexity Summary**

**Meaning:** High — Multiple dreams as facets of the American Dream; systemic vs. personal barriers

**Structure:** Middle High — Three-act dramatic structure; dialogue-driven; stage directions as meaning

**Language:** High — Generational dialect variation; sustained dramatic argument; rhetorical sophistication

**Knowledge:** High — Housing segregation, redlining, Great Migration, Civil Rights, dramatic conventions

**Overall Qualitative Rating: High (4 on a 0–5 scale)**

*A Raisin in the Sun* is the most qualitatively complex anchor in the Grade 7 sequence. It demands sophisticated interpretation of dramatic form, generational dialect, and layered thematic meaning, all within a dense historical context of racial injustice. Placed third in the sequence, it builds on the analytical skills and historical knowledge students developed in Units 1–2.

## Appendix D: Literary Text Qualitative Analysis

*Red, White, and Whole* by Rajani LaRocca (2021) | Verse Novel | Literary

**Rubric format:** Student Achievement Partners (achievethecore.org). **Ratings and text-based evidence:** Newsela

MEANING			
<b>HIGH</b> Multiple levels/layers of complex meaning	<b>MIDDLE HIGH</b> ✓ Multiple levels/layers of meaning	<b>MIDDLE LOW</b> Single level of complex meaning	<b>LOW</b> Single level of simple meaning
<b>Text-Based Evidence:</b> The title itself operates on multiple levels: “red, white, and blue” reimagined as “red, white, and whole”—replacing patriotic symbol with personal wholeness. “Red” signifies both blood (literally, through leukemia) and Indian cultural markers. “White” represents American assimilation pressure. “Whole” is the protagonist’s aspiration to integrate both identities. Reha’s experience navigating Indian and American cultures while her mother faces leukemia interweaves personal, cultural, and medical meaning. Blood is simultaneously a biological system, a family bond, and a cultural symbol.			
<b>Opportunities</b> Analyze the title’s triple meaning; trace how blood functions as literal and metaphorical throughout; discuss how Reha’s bicultural experience connects to the essential questions; examine what “whole” means across the novel		<b>Cautions &amp; Support Needed</b> Students may need support seeing the title’s wordplay; the interweaving of medical and cultural themes requires explicit instruction; the emotional weight of leukemia needs sensitive handling	

STRUCTURE			
<b>HIGH</b> Complex, implicit, unconventional structure	<b>MIDDLE HIGH</b> ✓ Some complexities; occasional shifts	<b>MIDDLE LOW</b> Largely simple, conventional	<b>LOW</b> Simple, explicit, chronological
<b>Text-Based Evidence:</b> Verse novel form with short, emotionally dense poems that function as chapters. White space, line breaks, and visual arrangement carry meaning—silence speaks. The structure alternates between Reha’s American school life and her Indian home life, creating a structural mirror of her bicultural experience. Non-linear at the micro level (individual poems use compression and juxtaposition) while maintaining a chronological macro arc. The verse form requires reading strategies distinct from prose.			
<b>Opportunities</b> Teach verse novel reading strategies; analyze how white space and line breaks create meaning; discuss how the alternating structure mirrors bicultural experience; compare with prose narrative structure		<b>Cautions &amp; Support Needed</b> Verse novel form is unfamiliar to many students; white space and compression need explicit instruction; students may read too quickly and miss the deliberate pacing; some poems require multiple readings	

LANGUAGE			
<b>HIGH</b> ✓ Heavy figurative; unfamiliar, archaic, domain-specific	<b>MIDDLE HIGH</b> Contains figurative language; somewhat complex	<b>MIDDLE LOW</b> Subtle figurative; conversational	<b>LOW</b> Little figurative; literal
<b>Text-Based Evidence:</b>			

LaRocca’s verse is precise, compressed, and imagistic. Every word carries weight—the economy of verse means there is no filler. Hindi and Tamil words appear throughout, creating a bilingual texture that mirrors Reha’s experience. Metaphor and symbolism are the primary meaning-making tools: blood, food (especially Indian dishes), color, and music function as extended symbols. The language shifts register between Reha’s American English, her family’s Indian English, and the clinical language of medical treatment.

**Opportunities**

Close read individual poems for craft and meaning; analyze how Hindi/Tamil words function; trace extended symbols (blood, food, color) across the novel; discuss how verse economy differs from prose

**Cautions & Support Needed**

Verse compression demands slow, careful reading; Hindi/Tamil vocabulary needs pronunciation and translation support; medical terminology requires glossary; the shift between registers needs highlighting

**KNOWLEDGE**

**HIGH**

Multiple complex themes; distinctly different experiences

**MIDDLE HIGH**

Multiple themes; uncommon experiences

**MIDDLE LOW** ✓

Single complex theme; common experiences

**LOW**

Single simple theme; everyday

**Text-Based Evidence:**

Requires knowledge of Indian American immigrant experience, Hindu cultural practices and values (Diwali, Carnatic music, Indian cuisine), basic hematology and leukemia treatment, bone marrow donation, and the social dynamics of bicultural identity in American schools. The cultural content is specific but relatable—most seventh graders understand the experience of navigating different social worlds. The medical content is the most specialized knowledge demand.

**Opportunities**

Pre-reading: introduce Indian cultural practices referenced in the text; study basic blood science and leukemia; discuss bicultural identity frameworks; connect to students’ own experiences of navigating multiple social worlds

**Cautions & Support Needed**

Indian cultural references need respectful contextualization; medical content requires age-appropriate scaffolding; students unfamiliar with immigrant experience need bridges to their own lives

**Qualitative Complexity Summary**

**Meaning:** Middle High — Triple title meaning; blood as literal and symbolic; bicultural wholeness

**Structure:** Middle High — Verse novel form; white space as meaning; alternating cultural worlds

**Language:** High — Compressed verse; bilingual texture; extended symbolism; register shifts

**Knowledge:** Middle Low — Indian American culture; basic hematology; relatable bicultural experience

**Overall Qualitative Rating: Middle High (3 on a 0–5 scale)**

*Red, White, and Whole* places its primary complexity in language and structure rather than knowledge. The verse form demands close, deliberate reading that rewards rereading—an ideal capstone for the year’s close reading progression. LaRocca’s compressed, imagistic poetry builds on the analytical skills developed across Units 1–3, while the bicultural identity theme synthesizes the year’s exploration of belonging, witness, and systemic barriers.

