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How to Use This Literature Guide

Today's standards demand rigor and relevance in the reading of complex texts. The units in this series guide teachers in a rich and deep exploration of worthwhile works of literature for classroom study. The most rigorous instruction can also be interesting and engaging!

Many current strategies for effective literacy instruction have been incorporated into these instructional guides for literature. Throughout the units, text-dependent questions are used to determine comprehension of the book as well as student interpretation of the vocabulary words. The books chosen for the series are complex exemplars of carefully crafted works of literature. Close reading is used throughout the units to guide students toward revisiting the text and using textual evidence to respond to prompts orally and in writing. Students must analyze the story elements in multiple assignments for each section of the book. All of these strategies work together to rigorously guide students through their study of literature.

The next few pages will make clear how to use this guide for a purposeful and meaningful literature study. Each section of this guide is set up in the same way to make it easier for you to implement the instruction in your classroom.

Theme Thoughts

The great works of literature used throughout this series have important themes that have been relevant to people for many years. Many of the themes will be discussed during the various sections of this instructional guide. However, it would also benefit students to have independent time to think about the key themes of the novel.

Before students begin reading, have them complete *Pre-Reading Theme Thoughts* (page 13). This graphic organizer will allow students to think about the themes outside the context of the story. They'll have the opportunity to evaluate statements based on important themes and defend their opinions. Be sure to have students keep their papers for comparison to the *Post-Reading Theme Thoughts* (page 64). This graphic organizer is similar to the pre-reading activity. However, this time, students will be answering the questions from the point of view of one of the characters in the novel. They have to think about how the character would feel about each statement and defend their thoughts. To conclude the activity, have students compare what they thought about the themes before they read the novel to what the characters discovered during the story.

How to Use This Literature Guide *(cont.)*

Vocabulary

Each teacher overview page has definitions and sentences about how key vocabulary words are used in the section. These words should be introduced and discussed with students. There are two student vocabulary activity pages in each section. On the first page, students are asked to define the ten words chosen by the author of this unit. On the second page in most sections, each student will select at least eight words that he or she finds interesting or difficult. For each section, choose one of these pages for your students to complete. With either assignment, you may want to have students get into pairs to discuss the meanings of the words. Allow students to use reference guides to define the words. Monitor students to make sure the definitions they have found are accurate and relate to how the words are used in the text.

On some of the vocabulary student pages, students are asked to answer text-related questions about the vocabulary words. The following question stems will help you create your own vocabulary questions if you'd like to extend the discussion.

- How does this word describe _____'s character?
- In what ways does this word relate to the problem in this story?
- How does this word help you understand the setting?
- In what ways is this word related to the story's solution?
- Describe how this word supports the novel's theme of
- What visual images does this word bring to your mind?
- For what reasons might the author have chosen to use this particular word?

At times, more work with the words will help students understand their meanings. The following quick vocabulary activities are a good way to further study the words.

- Have students practice their vocabulary and writing skills by creating sentences and/or paragraphs in which multiple vocabulary words are used correctly and with evidence of understanding.
- Students can play vocabulary concentration. Students make a set of cards with the words and a separate set of cards with the definitions. Then, students lay the cards out on the table and play concentration. The goal of the game is to match vocabulary words with their definitions.
- Students can create word journal entries about the words. Students choose words they think are important and then describe why they think each word is important within the novel.

How to Use This Literature Guide *(cont.)*

Analyzing the Literature

After students have read each section, hold small-group or whole-class discussions. Questions are written at two levels of complexity to allow you to decide which questions best meet the needs of your students. The Level 1 questions are typically less abstract than the Level 2 questions. Level 1 is indicated by a square, while Level 2 is indicated by a triangle. These questions focus on the various story elements, such as character, setting, and plot. Student pages are provided if you want to assign these questions for individual student work before your group discussion. Be sure to add further questions as your students discuss what they've read. For each question, a few key points are provided for your reference as you discuss the novel with students.

Reader Response

In today's classrooms, there are often great readers who are below-average writers. So much time and energy is spent in classrooms getting students to read on grade level that little time is left to focus on writing skills. To help teachers include more writing in their daily literacy instruction, each section of this guide has a literature-based reader response prompt. Each of the three genres of writing is used in the reader responses within this guide: narrative, informative/explanatory, and argument. Students have a choice between two prompts for each reader response. One response requires students to make connections between the reading and their own lives. The other prompt requires students to determine text-to-text connections or connections within the text.

Close Reading the Literature

Within each section, students are asked to closely reread a short section of text. Since some versions of the novels have different page numbers, the selections are described by chapter and location, along with quotations to guide the readers. After each close reading, there are text-dependent questions to be answered by students.

Encourage students to read each question one at a time and then go back to the text and discover the answer. Work with students to ensure that they use the text to determine their answers rather than making unsupported inferences. Once students have answered the questions, discuss what they discovered. Suggested answers are provided in the answer key.

How to Use This Literature Guide *(cont.)*

Close Reading the Literature *(cont.)*

The generic, open-ended stems below can be used to write your own text-dependent questions if you would like to give students more practice.

- Give evidence from the text to support
- Justify your thinking using text evidence about
- Find evidence to support your conclusions about
- What text evidence helps the reader understand . . . ?
- Use the book to tell why _____ happens.
- Based on events in the story,
- Use text evidence to describe why

Making Connections

The activities in this section help students make cross-curricular connections to writing, mathematics, science, social studies, or the fine arts. Each of these types of activities requires higher-order thinking skills from students.

Creating with the Story Elements

It is important to spend time discussing the common story elements in literature. Understanding the characters, setting, and plot can increase students' comprehension and appreciation of the story. If teachers discuss these elements daily, students will more likely internalize the concepts and look for the elements in their independent reading. Another important reason for focusing on the story elements is that students will be better writers if they think about how the stories they read are constructed.

Students are given three options for working with the story elements. They are asked to create something related to the characters, setting, or plot of the novel. Students are given a choice in this activity so that they can decide to complete the activity that most appeals to them. Different multiple intelligences are used so that the activities are diverse and interesting to all students.

Analyzing the Literature

Provided below are discussion questions you can use in small groups, with the whole class, or for written assignments. Each question is given at two levels so you can choose the right question for each group of students. Activity sheets with these questions are provided (pages 18–19) if you want students to write their responses. For each question, a few key discussion points are provided for your reference.

Story Element	■ Level 1	▲ Level 2	Key Discussion Points
Character	Who is Telemachus, and what are his feelings about the suitors?	How does Telemachus's behavior, especially toward his mother and the suitors, show that he is changing from a boy into a man?	Telemachus wishes to take control of his family's estates and is frustrated with the activities of the suitors. In Book 1, lines 409–439, he speaks out boldly to the suitors. In Book 2, he calls an assembly and then sets out on a voyage to discover the fate of his father. These behaviors show his change from boy to man.
Setting	Describe life at the palace in Ithaca. Who lives there, and what is happening there?	Compare and contrast life at the palace in Ithaca (Book 1) with life at Menelaus's palace in Sparta (Book 4).	Telemachus, his mother Penelope, their servants, and a gang of feasting, gaming suitors live at the palace in Ithaca. At Menelaus's palace, feasting also takes place, but the king is not absent and the environment is harmonious. The king and queen are clearly in control.
Character	Why do you think Penelope keeps putting off the decision to get remarried? How does she put it off?	What can we tell about Penelope from the way she tricks the suitors with her weaving project?	Penelope's deception with the shroud is first described in Book 2, lines 90–122. Penelope is clearly a skilled craftswoman and also very clever. We see that she is a good match for her clever husband. Her actions also show devotion to her husband's father, Laertes.
Plot	What are some ways that Athena helps Telemachus?	How important is the relationship of the gods to human beings in <i>The Odyssey</i> , and will it affect the outcome?	Athena takes a very active role in helping Telemachus. She fires him up so that he speaks out, prompts him to make his voyage, and assembles a crew for him. The gods interact directly with humans throughout <i>The Odyssey</i> and will have a large impact on the course of events.

Analyzing the Literature

Directions: Think about the section you just read. Read each question and state your response with textual evidence.

1. Who is Telemachus, and what are his feelings about the suitors?

2. Describe life at the palace in Ithaca. Who lives there, and what is happening there?

3. Why do you think Penelope keeps putting off the decision to get remarried? How does she put it off?

4. What are some ways that Athena helps Telemachus?

Name _____

Date _____



▲ Analyzing the Literature

Directions: Think about the section you just read. Read each question and state your response with textual evidence.

1. How does Telemachus's behavior, especially toward his mother and the suitors, show that he is changing from a boy into a man?

2. Compare and contrast life at the palace in Ithaca (Book 1) with life at Menelaus's palace in Sparta (Book 4).

3. What can we tell about Penelope from the way she tricks the suitors with her weaving project?

4. How important is the relationship of the gods to human beings in *The Odyssey*, and will it affect the outcome?

Name _____

Date _____



Close Reading the Literature

Directions: Closely reread Book 1, lines 112–206. Read each question, and then revisit the text to find evidence that supports your answer.

1. Locate the lines in the text where the suitors are introduced. What are they doing when we first meet them?

2. Think about what Telemachus is daydreaming about when we first meet him. What can we conclude about him based on this passage in the text?

3. The proper treatment of guests and strangers is a theme throughout *The Odyssey*. Use the text to point out specific things Telemachus does to properly welcome Athena when she arrives disguised as Mentos.

4. What kind of people do the suitors seem to be? Use evidence to describe how you know this.

Name _____

Date _____

Books 1–4

Creating with the Story Elements

Directions: Thinking about the story elements of character, setting, and plot in a novel is very important to understanding what is happening and why. Complete **one** of the following activities based on what you’ve read so far. Be creative and have fun!

Characters

Create a set of at least five “Character Profile Cards” for some or all of the characters from the first four books of *The Odyssey*. Include the following on each of the cards: *Physical Appearance*, *Age*, *Place of Residence*, *Strengths*, and *Weaknesses*. Use the text to help you fill in the profile information. Include an illustration of each character on the back of his or her card.

Setting

Create a map that shows the route of Telemachus’s voyage. For each location, include symbols on the map that provide information about the landscape, its inhabitants, and the livestock and crops. Also include a key. Find examples in the first four books of *The Odyssey*.

Plot

Telemachus is very secretive about his travels to Lacedaemon (Sparta) and Pylos. What if this were not the case? What if he decided to write home about his trip? Whom might Telemachus write to? What might he say? Create two imaginary letters or postcards from Telemachus, one written during his visit to Pylos and the other during his visit to Lacedaemon.