

GRADE 8

Unit overviews



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Progression of content and skills

The following unit overviews illustrate how the Amplify ELA curriculum has been carefully designed around sets and sequences of compelling texts that support deep engagement with the three instructional shifts called out by the English Language Arts standards. Each unit targets what is most powerful about each text, engaging students in a variety of reading, writing, and speaking and listening activities that put the text at the center of instruction.

Over the year, students explore text structures and elements across a broad range of genres—including plays, poetry, memoirs, visual documents, primary and secondary sources, and audio and video performances. Equally important, students develop a broad vocabulary and knowledge of a wide range of subject areas—from classic literature to contemporary literature; from neuroscience to key American thinkers; from modern, seminal drama to Greek mythology.

Integrated ELD support

With Amplify ELA's integrated ELD support, every student is given a chance to shine. Embedded supports within for English language learners (ELLs) enable all students to engage with and participate in discussions of the same grade-level texts.

Embedded ELD support within each unit includes:

- **Text previews** in English and Spanish.
- **Unit Background and Context summaries** in English and Spanish.
- **Differentiated writing prompts** with simplified language, guiding questions, and sentence starters.
- **Spanish translations of key texts** in research-based Collections units.
- **Personalized Vocab App instruction** featuring ELL-appropriate word lists, unique games, and additional visual supports.
- **Multi-Language Glossaries** in Arabic, Chinese, French, Haitian-Creole, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog, Urdu, and Vietnamese.

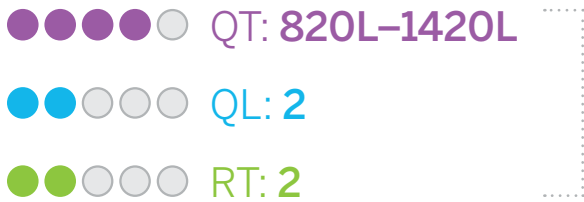


Path of text complexity

Amplify carefully selects and curates texts with the goal that all students work with increasing independence and proficiency with texts at their grade band level of complexity. To accomplish this goal, Amplify carefully considers three factors in determining the placement of texts within a grade and unit: qualitative measures, quantitative measures, and reader and task considerations.



i = Informational texts
L = Literary texts



QT = Quantitative measure
QL = Qualitative measure
RT = Reader and task measure



PROGRESSION OF CONTENT AND SKILLS

Quantitative measure ●●●●● QT: 820L–1420L

The **quantitative** measure in purple reflects the Lexile band, based on the Lexile scores of the range of texts within the unit. Lexile scores are based on a measurement of vocabulary word frequency and sentence complexity.

Band 1—Lexile 450–790
 Band 2—Lexile 770–980
 Band 3—Lexile 955–1155
 Band 4—Lexile 1080–1305
 Band 5—Lexile 1215–1355

Qualitative measure ●●●●● QL: 2

The **qualitative** measure in blue reflects the texts' structural and stylistic complexity (TS); the levels of meaning (LM) or purpose (P); the clarity and complexity of language and sentences (LCC); and the knowledge demands required of the reader to understand the text (KD). At a unit level, this measure also takes into account the inter-textual complexity. The scale is from 0–5, with 5 indicating the highest level of complexity.

	Accessible ●	Moderate ●●●	Complex ●●●●●
TS (L)	Organized clearly and/or chronologically; plot is linear; poetry has explicit and predictable structural elements	Prose includes multiple storylines or a plot that is somewhat difficult to predict; poetry has some implicit or unpredictable structural elements	Includes more intricate elements such as subplots, shifts in point-of-view or time, or non-standard text structures
(i)	Connections are explicit and clear; organization is linear; text features help readers but are not essential to understanding	Connections are implicit or subtle; organization is generally evident and sequential; text features help facilitate comprehension	Connections are often implicit, subtle, or ambiguous; organization exhibits discipline-specific traits; any text features are essential to comprehension
LCC	Language is explicit and literal, with mostly familiar vocabulary; mostly simple sentences	Language is often explicit and literal but includes some academic or archaic words, or words with complex meaning; some complex sentences with subordinate phrases or clauses	Abstract, ironic, and/or figurative language; archaic and academic vocabulary and domain-specific words; complex sentences with subordinate phrases and clauses
KD	The text explores a single theme; the subject matter relies on little or no discipline-specific knowledge; any references or allusions are fully explained in the text	The text explores several themes; the subject matter involves some discipline-specific knowledge; some references or allusions; the meaning of references or allusions are partially explained	Text explores complex or abstract themes; the subject matter relies on discipline-specific knowledge; text is dependent on allusions or references that require inference and evaluation
LM	One level of meaning; theme is obvious and revealed early in the text	Multiple levels of meaning that are relatively easy to identify; theme is clear but may be conveyed with some subtlety	Multiple levels of meaning that may be difficult to identify and interpret; theme is implicit, subtle, or ambiguous and may be revealed over the entirety of the text
P	Primary purpose is narrowly focused, and explicitly stated; the text has a singular perspective	Primary purpose is not explicit but is easily inferred; the text may include multiple perspectives	Text contains multiple purposes, and the primary purpose is subtle, intricate, and/or abstract

PROGRESSION OF CONTENT AND SKILLS

Reader and task measure ●●●●● RL: 2

The **reader and task measure** in green considers the complexity of the tasks that accompany the texts and the demands that these tasks place on readers. In determining this measure, Amplify considers the placement of texts within a unit, grade, or program; the knowledge demands and the supports put in place to scaffold this knowledge; the complexity of the key tasks and sequence of steps leading up to those tasks.

Accessible ●

Tasks and activities are typically straightforward or highly engaging and do not require abstract inferencing or substantial external knowledge or experience.

Moderate ●●●

Tasks and activities may contain some complexity, balanced with engaging topics; activities often require inferencing; students benefit from the knowledge they have built throughout the unit.

Complex ●●●●●

Tasks and activities contain nuance and complexity and require students to be persistent, make high level inferences, and draw on the knowledge they have built throughout Amplify. Areas of high complexity balanced by scaffolds and engaging activities.

A variety of genres

The Amplify units expose students to a wide variety of text genres and types, identified in this document with the following abbreviations:

LITERATURE

L/S - Story
L/D - Drama
L/P - Poetry

INFORMATIONAL

I/LN - Literary Nonfiction
I/H - Historical
I/S&T - Scientific and Technical



Grade 8 units



●●●●● QT: 830L–1080L

●●●●● QL: 3

●●●●● RT: 3

8A: Perspectives & Narrative

BIG IDEA

Making sense of individual, cultural, and familial identity within conflicting forces of society

READING

Notice the impact of author's craft and structure

WRITING

Write a narrative about a childhood memory

ACTIVITY HIGHLIGHTS

Narrative writing: Use dialogue, details, and description to bring a childhood memory to life

Writing workshops: Practice narrative writing techniques modeled in mentor texts and respond with constructive comments to peers' writing

Meet the author: Watch and discuss videos of Kaitlyn Greenidge, author of "My Mother's Garden"

TEXT FEATURES

WWII memoir, contemporary coming-of-age narratives, issues of equity



●●●●● QT: 900–1500L

●●●●● QL: 5

●●●●● RT: 4

8B: Liberty & Equality

BIG IDEA

The meaning of "all men are created equal"

READING

Evaluate how an author builds an argument in a narrative text

WRITING

Analyze how authors use language to make a case for liberty and equality

ACTIVITY HIGHLIGHTS

Integrate media formats: Analyze Chadwick Boseman's performance of the opening of *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*

Speech writing: Use mentor texts to prepare and deliver an abolitionist speech at an Anti-Slavery Fair

Quest: Explore personal testimonies, songs, photographs, and other Emancipation-era documents

TEXT FEATURES

19th-century language and syntax, slave narratives, and political rhetoric



●●●●● QT: 840L–1540L

●●●●● QL: 4

●●●●● RT: 4

8C: Science & Science Fiction

BIG IDEA

Creators vs. creations

READING

Analyze an author's development of themes

WRITING

Argue opposing claims about a character and resolve the contradiction

ACTIVITY HIGHLIGHTS

The creature in your own words: Draw on graphic novel illustrations to tell the story from the creature's point of view

Archetype analysis: Compare and contrast passages from *Frankenstein* with excerpts from Genesis and "Prometheus"

Debate: Argue central questions about whether the creature deserves a mate and which character deserves more sympathy

TEXT FEATURES

Gothic text in graphic form, archaic language, biblical and mythological allusions



8D: Shakespeare's Romeo & Juliet

BIG IDEA

The forces of love vs. the forces of hate

READING

Paraphrase Shakespearean English and trace extended metaphors

WRITING

Choose between contradictory positions and argue with evidence

ACTIVITY HIGHLIGHTS

Recite Shakespeare: Memorize and perform the prologue to *Romeo and Juliet*

Extend the metaphor: Analyze Shakespeare's use of figurative language and create new metaphors for Romeo to praise Juliet

Integrate media formats: Compare and contrast film versions of a play with the original script

TEXT FEATURES

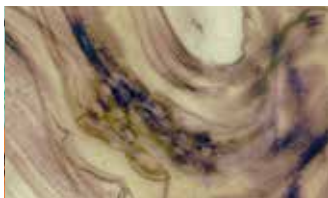
Drama with Elizabethan language and structures, inverted syntax, extensive figurative language



●●●●● QT: N/A

●●●●● QL: 5

●●●●● RT: 3



8E: Holocaust: Memory & Meaning

BIG IDEA

The influences of and responses to the Holocaust

READING

Synthesize multiple accounts to develop understanding and empathy

WRITING

Analyze the impact of propaganda and explain the response to unfolding events

ACTIVITY HIGHLIGHTS

Remembrance poems: Read and write poems on the theme of remembrance

Propaganda analysis: Analyze anti-Semitic propaganda and other techniques that Nazis used to turn Germany against its Jewish citizens

Meet the author: Use video interviews with survivor Irene Butter to reflect on what we can learn from the Holocaust

TEXT FEATURES

Poems, articles, memoirs, graphic novel, portrayals of sensitive content



●●●●● QT: 500L-1220L

●●●●● QL: 4

●●●●● RT: 5



8F: The Space Race Collection

BIG IDEA

The successes and sacrifices of space exploration

READING

Integrate information from a variety of sources and perspectives to develop a nuanced understanding of complex topics

WRITING

Develop a question, conduct research, and create a multimedia project

ACTIVITY HIGHLIGHTS

Develop information literacy: Evaluate the reliability and credibility of online informational sources

Role-play: Research an astronaut or cosmonaut and write blogs from their point of view

Socratic seminar: Engage in student-led discussions about research topics

TEXT FEATURES

Primary and secondary source documents, speeches, and images



●●●●● QT: 870L-1490L

●●●●● QL: 5

●●●●● RT: 4

Grade 8 curriculum map

8A: Perspectives & Narrative

Unit summary

Students learn to read like writers—to pay attention to the craft of writing and the moves a good writer makes to shape the way the reader sees a scene or feels about a character, to stir us up, to surprise us, or to leave us wondering what will happen next. This early focus on the student writer is designed to help place student voices at the center of learning.

In the Get Started sub-unit, students are introduced to the core literacy skills of Focus and Showing, hone their powers of observation and concentration, and practice the fundamental classroom routines of sharing and feedback that draw them into a collaborative community of readers and writers. In the Narrative Writing sub-unit, students study three examples of narrative writing—passages from Roald Dahl’s *Going Solo*, Amy Tan’s “Fish Cheeks,” and Kaitlyn Greenidge’s “My Mother’s Garden”—closely reading each text to discover how the authors use key narrative writing skills to convey their ideas. They also discuss themes of belonging/not belonging as they explore Tan’s and Greenidge’s snapshots of Asian and Black adolescence. Students respond to Writing Prompts that alternate between analytic and narrative writing, and write a short personal narrative about a moment from their childhood. The unit culminates in an essay where students argue whether the mothers in “Fish Cheeks” and “My Mother’s Garden” are role models.



QT: 830L–1080L



QL: 3



RT: 3



Rationale(s) for QL

- Language is literal and familiar.
- Text structure is generally straightforward but often implicit.
- Texts may include multiple purposes or be stated implicitly.

Rationale(s) for RT

- Tasks and activities contain nuance and complexity, balanced with engaging topics; activities often require inferencing; students benefit from the knowledge they have built throughout the unit.

Sub-units and # of lessons

Core lessons

- SU1: Welcome! (1 lesson)
- SU2: Get Started (9 lessons)
- SU3: Narrative Writing (10 lessons)

Summative assessments

- SU4: Write an Essay: Argumentative (5 lessons)
- Perspectives & Narrative Unit Reading Assessment

Essay prompt

Are the mothers featured in “Fish Cheeks” and “My Mother’s Garden” role models for their daughters? Why or why not?

Vocabulary module

Synonyms and Antonyms

Focus Standards

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.5
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.3.B
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.3
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.3.C
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.4
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.3.D
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.5
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.3.E
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.6
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.4
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.1
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.5
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.1.A
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.6
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.1.B
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.9
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.1.C
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.9.B
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.1.D
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.1
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.1.E
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.1.C
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.2.B
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.2
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.3
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.8.2
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.3.A
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.8.2.C

8B: Liberty & Equality

Unit summary

Students study the writings of both famous and lesser-known Americans who were critically, intellectually, and physically engaged in a debate about the meaning of the words “all men are created equal” during the Civil War time period. Each text gives students a different perspective on the American ideal.

Students read excerpts from Walt Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass* and try on his poetic form and use of figurative language to capture what is essential about themselves. Frederick Douglass’s powerful voice and abolitionist argument, set forth in his *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, is the students’ guiding voice as they reflect on, discuss, write about, and debate ideas of equality, opportunity, justice, and freedom. The text introduces students to the young Douglass as he moves toward personal liberation, and provides the opportunity for students to analyze Douglass’s powerful arguments against slavery. Students also read passages from Harriet Ann Jacobs’s *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, analyzing how her graceful style and detailed picture of life as an enslaved woman paint a powerful portrait of slavery’s human cost. For teachers who want to bring in additional accounts and perspectives on slavery in the United States, *The Emancipation Project* Quest contains primary source spoken testimonies, photographs, and period music—many collected as part of the Federal Writers’ Project of the 1930s. Next, students read passages from *The Boys’ War*, which tells the tale of the very young people who signed up enthusiastically to fight on both sides during the Civil War. Finally, after critically examining the voices of all these eyewitnesses to slavery, the abolitionist movement, and the Civil War, students are asked in their unit essay to consider a central argument from Douglass’s *Narrative*, as well as Lincoln’s implied question in his Gettysburg Address: What does America mean by “all men are created equal”?



QT: 900L–1500L



QL: 5



RT: 4



Rationale(s) for QL

- Texts include multiple or intricate purposes.
- Language is generally complex in word usage, level of abstraction, and sentence complexity.
- The subject matter requires discipline-specific knowledge or references to other texts.

Rationale(s) for RT

- Tasks and activities contain nuance and complexity and require students to be persistent, make high level inferences, and benefit from the knowledge they have built throughout the unit.

Sub-units and # of lessons

Core lessons

- SU1: “Song of Myself” by Walt Whitman (2 lessons)
- SU2: *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* by Frederick Douglass (14 lessons)
- SU3: *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* by Harriet Jacobs (2 lessons)
- SU4: *The Boys’ War* by Jim Murphy (3 lessons)
- SU5: The Gettysburg Address (5 lessons)

Summative assessments

- SU6: Write an Essay: Informative (5 lessons)
- Liberty & Equality Unit Reading Assessment

Quest

- *The Emancipation Project*

Essay prompt

Choose one:

How does Lincoln, in the Gettysburg Address, try to change what his readers/ listeners believe about what it means to be dedicated to the American idea that “All men are created equal”?

How does Douglass, in *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, try to change what his readers believe about what it means to be dedicated to the American idea that “all men are created equal”?

Vocabulary module

Context Clues

Focus Standards

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.4 | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.2.D |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.5 | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.2.E |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.1 | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.2.F |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.2 | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.3 |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.3 | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.3.D |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.4 | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.4 |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.6 | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.5 |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.7 | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.6 |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.8 | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.7 |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.9 | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.9.B |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.1 | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.1.A |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.1.D | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.1.D |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.2 | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.2 |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.2.A | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.3 |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.2.B | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.4 |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.2.C | |

8C: Science & Science Fiction

Unit summary

Students read *Gris Grimly's Frankenstein*, a graphic novel that adds captivating illustrations to an abridgement of the 1818 edition of Mary Shelley's book. Paired with Shelley's text, Grimly's haunting representations of Frankenstein's creature push students to wrestle with some of the text's central themes: a creator's responsibility for their creation, the role of society in shaping our presence in the world, and the promises and risks of scientific inquiry. Students trace Victor's level of sympathy for his creation throughout the story, rewrite key scenes from the creature's point of view, analyze Shelley's allusions to archetypes in mythological and biblical texts, and debate whether Victor owes the creature a companion. At the end of the unit, after research and debate, students write to determine whether or not Victor's creature should ultimately be considered human.

In the "Poetical Science" sub-unit, students read two poems, a speech, and excerpts from Chapter 1 of Walter Isaacson's *The Innovators* to compare and contrast the ways in which William Wordsworth, Lord Byron, and Ada Lovelace viewed humanity's relationship with technology. The texts in this unit raise the question: Are we the masters of our machines, or are the machines our masters?

Sub-units and # of lessons

Core lessons

- SU1: *Gris Grimly's Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley and Gris Grimly (17 lessons)
- SU3: Poetical Science (6 lessons)

Summative assessments

- SU2: Write an Essay: Argumentative (5 lessons)
- Science & Science Fiction Unit Reading Assessment

Essay prompt

Is Frankenstein's creature human?



QT: 840L–1540L



QL: 4



RT: 4



Rationale(s) for QL

- Text structure contains some sophisticated structural elements.
- Language is generally complex in word usage, level of abstraction, and sentence complexity.
- Levels of meanings and/or theme may be conveyed with some subtlety.

Rationale(s) for RT

- Tasks and activities contain nuance and complexity and require students to be persistent, make high level inferences, and draw on the knowledge they have built throughout Amplify; areas of high complexity balanced by scaffolds and engaging activities.

Vocabulary module

Greek and Latin Roots

Focus Standards

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.1 | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.1.E |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.2 | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.2 |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.3 | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.3 |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.4 | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.4 |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.5 | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.5 |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.6 | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.6 |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.9 | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.9 |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.3 | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.9.A |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.6 | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.1 |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.1 | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.1.B |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.1.B | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.1.D |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.1.C | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.3 |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.1.D | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.6 |

8D: Shakespeare's Romeo & Juliet

Unit summary

Students read five excerpts from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. The purpose of these lessons is to introduce students to some key elements of Shakespearean English as they close read a small selection of scenes. After students have finished the unit, they will have learned how to spot and follow an extended metaphor, discovered that they can understand Shakespearean English by putting it into their own words, and be better prepared when they study this play (or another Shakespeare play) in its entirety in high school.

Students practice memorizing and reciting lines from the play's famous prologue over the course of the unit. The lessons provide multiple opportunities for students to stage their own performances and recitations and translate Shakespeare's words into more contemporary language. In several lessons, students focus on the form of Shakespeare's language, particularly the Shakespearean sonnet. At the end of the unit, students write an essay arguing whether the forces of love or hate are responsible for Romeo's death.

Sub-units and # of lessons

Core lessons

- SU1: *Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare (16 lessons)

Summative assessments

- SU2: Write an Essay: Argumentative (5 lessons)
- Shakespeare's Romeo & Juliet Unit Reading Assessment

Essay prompt

Was Romeo's death influenced more by the power of love or the forces of hate? Or was it a combination of both?



QT: N/A



QL: 5



RT: 3



Rationale(s) for QL

- Levels of meaning and theme are multiple, ambiguous and/or revealed over the course of the text.
- Language is generally complex in word usage, level of abstraction, and sentence complexity.

Rationale(s) for RT

- Tasks and activities contain nuance and complexity, balanced with engaging topics; activities often require inferencing; students benefit from the knowledge they have built throughout the unit.

Vocabulary module

Figurative Language

Focus Standards

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.1 | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.1.D |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.2 | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.1.E |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.3 | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.2 |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.4 | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.2.D |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.7 | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.5 |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.1 | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.6 |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.1.A | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.9.A |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.1.B | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.2 |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.1.C | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.6 |

8E: Holocaust: Memory & Meaning

Unit summary

Students use a language arts lens and close reading to explore a variety of memoir and primary source materials and dig into two key questions raised by the Holocaust: How does a society and its people become participants (willingly or indifferently) in such an atrocity? And what is the responsibility of those who experienced, witnessed, participated in, or are now learning about these events? The selected materials present events from several different perspectives—those of perpetrators, survivors, victims, bystanders, and witnesses—allowing students to develop a critical understanding of the strategies Nazis used to influence the mindset of a nation, and the human responses to the unfolding of genocide.

First, students analyze “I Cannot Forget,” a poem by Holocaust survivor Alexander Kimel that explores the haunting power of memory. Next, students read from the memoir *Shores Beyond Shores*, in which author Irene Butter describes how her Jewish family’s happy life in Berlin was slowly destroyed as the Nazis came to power. As a counterpoint, students examine passages by Alfons Heck, an Aryan boy who became an enthusiastic member of the Hitler Youth. Students also explore articles and images that show the Nazi propaganda machine in full swing during the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin. They analyze how the government sought to showcase the supposed superiority of the Aryan race, and explore how Jessie Owens’s historic performance captivated the German audience and “put the lie” to Hitler’s rhetoric. Finally, students read excerpts from *A Child of Hitler*, *Maus*, and *Night*, where participants and survivors trace the descent into darkness: from Kristallnacht, to the creation of the ghettos, and eventually to the death camps. As students study these writings, images, and videos, they begin to understand the forces that created and drove the Holocaust and the reactions of people caught up in those forces.



QT: 500L–1220L



QL: 4



RT: 5



Rationale(s) for QL

- Texts include multiple or intricate purposes.
- Text structure is generally straightforward but often implicit.
- The subject matter requires discipline-specific knowledge or references to other texts.

Rationale(s) for RT

- Tasks and activities contain nuance and complexity and require students to be persistent, make high level inferences, and draw on the knowledge they have built throughout Amplify; areas of high complexity balanced by scaffolds and engaging activities.

Sub-units and # of lessons

Core lessons

- SU1: Why Remember? (1 lesson)
- SU2: “True” Germans (3 lessons)
- SU3: The Olympic Games of Berlin (4 lessons)
- SU4: Descending Into Darkness (5 lessons)
- SU5: Never Forget (1 lesson)

Summative assessments

- SU6: Write an Essay: Informative (5 lessons)
- Holocaust: Memory & Meaning Unit Reading Assessment

Essay prompt

The Holocaust did not happen overnight. As the Nazis laid the groundwork for what would eventually become known as the Holocaust, they used a number of strategies to isolate, oppress, and control the Jewish population of Europe, and to convince others to go along with their plan.

Choose two of the strategies that stood out to you as you explored this unit. Using examples from the texts and images you analyzed, describe each strategy and the impact it had.

Vocabulary module

Connotations and Denotations

Focus Standards

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.2 | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.2.D |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.3 | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.2.E |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.2 | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.2.F |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.3 | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.3.D |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.5 | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.4 |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.6 | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.5 |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.8 | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.6 |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.9 | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.9 |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.1 | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.1 |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.2 | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.1.C |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.2.A | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.2 |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.2.B | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.5 |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.2.C | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.8.1 |

8F: The Space Race Collection

Unit summary

In this Collection, students explore primary documents and conduct independent research to better understand the Space Race, a fierce competition between two of the world’s superpowers that continued for nearly 18 years. The dramatic story of the Space Race offers students a rich research topic to explore as they build information literacy skills and learn how to construct their own research questions and explore the Internet for answers. They explore the diverse range of people who fueled this race, from Soviet cosmonauts like Alexei Leonov, to President Kennedy, to Laika the space dog, to American heroes like the celebrated Buzz Aldrin and the overlooked hero, mathematician Katherine Johnson. Students also participate in a Socratic seminar in which they rely on their research to examine the complicated issues inherent in the history of the Space Race.

Throughout these activities, students conduct research to develop a deep understanding of this unique international competition. Each student is assigned a cosmonaut or astronaut from the Space Race era. They research their cosmonaut or astronaut and write entries into their space blog from their person’s point of view. As students reach the end of the unit, they synthesize all of the skills they’ve developed to tackle a culminating research assignment—part essay, part media project.



870L–1490L

QL: 5

RT: 4



Rationale(s) for QL

- Texts include multiple or intricate purposes.
- Language is generally complex in word usage, level of abstraction, and sentence complexity.
- The subject matter requires knowledge of discipline or of other texts.

Rationale(s) for RT

- Tasks and activities contain nuance and complexity and require students to be persistent, make high level inferences, and benefit from the knowledge they have built throughout the unit.

Sub-units and # of lessons

Core lessons

- SU1: Information Literacy (4 lessons)
- SU2: Scavenger Hunt and Internet Research (4 lessons)
- SU3: Space Blogs and Collection Research (4 lessons)
- SU4: Socratic Seminar and Internet Research (4 lessons)

Summative assessments

- SU5: Write an Essay: Research-based Informative or Argumentative (6 lessons); Multimedia Project (2 lessons)
- SU6: The Space Race Collection Reading Assessment

Essay prompt

Research Option 1: Was animal testing necessary during the Space Race?

Research and discover what the Soviets and the Americans were trying to understand when they sent animals into space. Was animal testing necessary? Was it fair or moral to send animals into space for research purposes? Could the scientists have found the answers they were looking for without sacrificing animals? If so, how?

Research Option 2: How did Katherine Johnson and the other women who worked with her at NASA impact the Space Race?

Write an informative essay about Katherine Johnson and the other key women who worked at NASA during the Space Race era. Who were the other key women who worked with Katherine Johnson and what roles did they play? What barriers did they face? How was the Space Race impacted by their work?

Vocabulary module

Prefixes and Suffixes

Focus Standards

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.2 | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.2.D |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.3 | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.2.E |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.2 | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.2.F |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.3 | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.3.D |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.5 | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.4 |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.6 | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.5 |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.8 | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.6 |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.9 | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.9 |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.1 | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.1 |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.2 | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.1.C |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.2.A | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.2 |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.2.B | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.5 |
| • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.2.C | • CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.8.1 |

Grade 8 Poetry in America

Amplify partnered with Poetry in America, whose mission is to bring poetry into classrooms and living rooms around the world, to design lessons that combine PIA's "Four Pillar" approach with Amplify's close reading pedagogy to build students' engagement and knowledge about poetry. Each three-lesson sub-unit allows students to fully explore a poet's choices around form and language, both in conversation with each other and with the poets, celebrities, academics, and citizens who appear in embedded videos discussing each poem. Then, students have the opportunity to try on the poet's use of language, craft, and structure in creative writing assignments tailored to the targeted poem.

In Sub-unit 1, Ed Hirsch's poem "Fast Break" describes the action of a fast break in a basketball game, extending both the motion and the emotion in content and form. Students work alongside NBA players like Shaquille O'Neal (appearing in embedded videos) to first enjoy how the poem mimics the pace and action of a fast break before exploring how this vivid description operates as an elegy. Students then experiment with elements of "Fast Break" to create their own poem centered around a favorite activity.

In Sub-unit 2, students consider the personal and cultural background that African American poet Richard Hayden drew on for his iconic poem "Those Winter Sundays," and how those influences are reflected in his language and his adaptation of the sonnet form for this poem about his father. They use his poem as an inspiration for writing their own ode to an unsung hero in their life (this sub-unit is made available across grades 6–8).

Poetry in America activity highlights:

Discussions with annotated guides

Explore each poet's use of sensory details, figurative language, form, and structure.

Video explorations

Watch and discuss videos where poets, celebrities, and academics share their interpretations and analyses of each poem.

Creative responses

Compose poems by experimenting with theme and mimicking each poet's style.

Core texts

- "Fast Break" by Ed Hirsch, L/P
- "Those Winter Sundays" by Robert Hayden, L/P



QL: 3



RT: 2



Rationale(s) for QL

- Level meanings and/or theme may be conveyed with some subtlety.
- The subject matter requires some literary/cultural knowledge but references are largely explained.

Rationale(s) for RT

- Tasks and activities may contain some complexity, balanced with engaging topics; activities do not require substantial external knowledge or experience.

Sub-units and # of lessons

SU1: "Fast Break" (3 lessons)

SU2: "Those Winter Sundays" (3 lessons)

Standards

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.1
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.2
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.3
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.4
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.5
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.6
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.9
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.10
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.3.B
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.3.D
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.4
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.6
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.10
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.1
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.1.C
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.2
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.6
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.8.1.B
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.8.2.A
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.8.3
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.8.4.D
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.8.5
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.8.5.A
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.8.5.C
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.8.6

Amplify Grammar

The Amplify digital Grammar unit enables teachers to assign students self-guided grammar instruction and practice. Sub-units are paired by topic: one covers foundational material on the topic and one contains more advanced and “stretch” material. Middle grade teachers and students share access to the full range of topics and lessons within the Grammar unit, so teachers select the content that best meets their students’ needs while exposing students to key grammar topics for the middle grades. Teachers integrate this instruction into their core instructional pathway using the Amplify Flex Days within the core units. To introduce or review topics with students, teachers use the related lessons or drills on the topic found in Amplify’s *Mastering Conventions* PDFs, also available within this unit.



Sub-units

- Sub-unit 1: What Is a Complete Sentence? (8 Lessons)
- Sub-unit 2: Expanding the Complete Sentence (8 Lessons)
- Sub-unit 3: Understanding the Pronoun (5 Lessons)
- Sub-unit 4: Pronoun Usage: Agreement and Reference (5 Lessons)
- Sub-unit 5: Verb Tense (4 Lessons)
- Sub-unit 6: Verb Moods, Modals, and Voice (4 Lessons)
- Sub-unit 7: Punctuation (2 Lessons)

Printable instructional resources

- *Mastering Conventions One: Grammar and Punctuation*
- *Mastering Conventions Two: Grammar and Punctuation*
- *Mastering Conventions Three: Grammar and Punctuation*
- *Mastering Conventions Four: Spelling*

Standards

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.6.1.C
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.6.1.D
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.6.2.A
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.7.1.C
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.8.1.A
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.8.1.B
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.8.1.C
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.8.1.D
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.8.2
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.8.2.A
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.8.2.B

Advanced story writing

In this unit, students get to practice their creative writing skills, learning the elements of storytelling and character development, and the importance of vivid language. Students gain a sense of ownership over their writing as they experiment with the impact of their authorial choices on sentences, language, character traits, and plot twist. As students consider how to use these elements to create a story, they also gain tools to help them effectively and incisively analyze a piece of literature.

Students begin with creating a believable, multi-faceted character, observing and recording details, and experimenting with narrative point of view, including working with multiple narrators. As students explore the story's rising action, they work with both internal and external conflict to set up the conditions for their characters' change and growth as the story resolves. Students pull all their drafting and thinking together to write a story and practice the most important part of creative writing—revision.

Sub-units

- Sub-unit 1: Creating a Believable Character (10 Lessons)
- Sub-unit 2: Experimenting With a Second Character (7 Lessons)
- Sub-unit 3: Writing a Short Story (5 Lessons)

Standards

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.3.A
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.3.B
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.3.C
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.3.D
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.3.E
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.4
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.5
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.6
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.1.B
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.1.C

Novel guides

Amplify ELA Novel Guides provide middle school teachers with flexible study guides for the books they most want to teach and provide students with lean, targeted instruction that follows the pedagogy in core units. The diverse selection of books in this series presents a range of genres and themes, from mystery to non-fiction and from social justice to identity and courage.

The Novel Guides—housed in the Amplify Library—are designed to be used flexibly and offer suggestions for implementation. Here are two titles that align to the grade 8 topics and skills:

8B: *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas

As students consider Douglass's powerful critique of America's ideals of justice and equity, this novel offers a way to consider how this critique extends to current issues facing American society.

8F: *Hidden Figures* by Margot Lee Shetterly

Students studying America's Space Race will be fascinated by the story of how Black women played such a pivotal role in the success of this endeavor—and how their contributions were almost forgotten.

For more information on Amplify ELA,
visit [amplify.com/ela](https://www.amplify.com/ela).

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