

Critical Thinkers Are World Changers

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Abstract:

The purpose of this curriculum unit is to give educators a tool by which to get students thinking, hopefully about topics that are relevant to them and about which they feel strongly. This is the essence of philosophy. This curriculum is designed for the middle school ELA classroom and will ignite lively discussions and inspire passionate writing. In fact, this unit is a catalyst by which many more units can be developed. The unit is divided into four sub-sections, which can actually be considered entire units within themselves. The first sub-section, “Who Am I? Am I Who I Want to Be?” has five complete lesson plans included which can be used as a template to design lessons for the three remaining sub-sections. The implementation of the curriculum requires access to technology, but can be modified to use without technology. Students will explore philosophical themes through literature, poetry, informational, and biographical texts and will respond to them in creative ways that will develop their critical thinking skills.

Rationale

As a middle school educator in the city of Philadelphia for nearly 20 years, I have observed that there is more that unites my students than divides them. Whether teaching 6th graders in a private, Christian school, or teaching 5th-8th graders in a public community school, my students have faced many of the same challenges. In addition to the tremendous amounts of trauma many of my students have endured, they have struggled with being able to view their world from any other perspective outside of their own. This, in turn, limits their ability to think critically, not only about what they read, but also about what they experience. The purpose of this curriculum unit is to provide a way for educators to address this deficit in a way that empowers students to not only to think critically and philosophically, but also to act in a way that changes their lives and the world around them.

This curriculum is designed to be taught in a middle school English Language Arts (ELA) classroom at the Tilden Middle School in Southwest Philadelphia. Tilden is a Title 1 school where 100% of the approximately 400 students receive free breakfast and lunch. The student population is incredibly diverse with more than 35 nations represented and nearly as many languages spoken. Approximately 16% of our students are English Language Learners (ELL) and 20% of our students receive special education services. Although 5th and 6th graders will be targeted with this unit, it will be appropriate for 7th and 8th graders and possibly high school students as well.

Within the School District of Philadelphia, and many other districts across the country, there is a huge focus on teaching students to think critically and to engage in

higher order thinking. According to Bloom's Taxonomy (Bloom, 1956), the highest levels of thinking are analysis, synthesis, and evaluation, and these are the skills required for middle school English students to implement as they read and interpret all forms of literature and informational texts.

One of the challenges, however, in working with middle school students who have endured so much trauma in their lives is finding a way to help them access the materials they read in such a critical fashion that it allows them to recognize the relevance to their own lives and empowers them to become agents of change, as opposed to being lifelong victims of their environments. When students are unable to see the relevance of what they are reading to their own lives, they are less likely to be engaged fully in the educational process. It is not that they are *unable* to think critically—they are *unwilling* to think critically about things that do not matter to them, or at least, they perceive to be of little or no value to them. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the educator to make the material relevant by the way he or she encourages the students to think critically about what they have read. The questioning techniques the educator employs are crucial to helping students explore the texts beyond the surface in order to access the deeper meanings. The educator also makes the material relevant by the choices made about which reading selections to which to expose their students. For far too long, our students of color and students from different ethnic backgrounds have primarily been exposed reading materials that do not reflect their race, ethnicity, culture, or religious beliefs. This does not serve to empower them to be positively engaged in the world around them because they do not see others that look like them doing so in the materials they read.

The purpose of this curriculum unit is multi-faceted. Obviously, it must address the common core ELA standards on every level—district, state, and national—in order to be implemented in middle school ELA classrooms in this country. I believe, however, that in order for educators to be more successful in accomplishing this primary goal, the barriers to success must be addressed in order to encourage all students, especially the most disenfranchised and vulnerable students in our districts, to be more fully engaged in the learning process. Ultimately, while students are mastering the skills to be successful on high-stakes tests, which are far less relevant and meaningful to them, they should also be learning skills that will help them not only survive in the communities in which they live, but also thrive and become agents of change in the world around them. This is decidedly of utmost importance to them and will lead to more engagement in other areas as well.

Therefore, I believe that students possessing greater critical thinking skills will be more prone to making better decisions, will be more equipped to develop a positive self-identity, and will be more empowered to promote social justice by acting on what they believe and working to bring about radical changes in the world around them. When students are better able to explore the consequences of their choices, not just the

immediate ones, but also the long-term ones, they will be more likely to make choices that benefit not only themselves, but others as well. When students are better able to see themselves in a positive light, not simply through the lens of others, they will be more likely to see the value in themselves as well as in others. And finally, when students are able to recognize that not only are they valuable, they are also powerful, they will begin to see that they do not have to continue to succumb to the forces around them, but that they can become agents of change in the world around them. This is the ultimate growth mindset which produces world changers. I believe every educator wants to play a part in producing generations of students that are critical thinkers and world changers.

Background

In order to encourage students to think critically, they have to be given the opportunity to grapple with questions that are important to them. Children have been asking philosophical questions from the time they were old enough to ask questions. This propensity toward questioning is deeply rooted in their desire to understand themselves, to make sense of the world around them, and thus to understand their place in and relationship to the world around them and to others. Philosophy is basically this journey into the world of inquiry.

A person could choose to embark upon this journey alone, but how much more valuable and meaningful it would be if one's peers were invited to come along for the ride and explore this territory together? I believe the classroom presents the perfect environment for students to tackle these questions because not only will they have the opportunity to voice their own opinions, they will also benefit from hearing the opinions of others. Students can then think through and re-think their own positions when given the chance to view them through different lens.

The background information for this unit will focus on the exploration of four basic philosophical questions:

- A. Who am I? Am I who I want to be? Narrative Self-Constitution Theory
- B. Does my voice matter? Do I matter? Standpoint Epistemology
- C. How do I determine what is right or wrong? Relativism vs. Objectivism
- D. How should I respond to things that I believe to be wrong? What is my responsibility in matters of injustice? Duty-Based Ethics Theories

Part A: A Version of Narrative Self-Constitution Theory

Young people often struggle with issues of identity and it is not unusual to find that these struggles continue into adulthood. How students address these issues as teenagers will in many ways determine what kind of person they will become as adults. Therefore, it is

important to give them an opportunity to begin to think about the kind of person they are, determine if they are satisfied with who they are, and if they are not satisfied, figure out what they can begin to do now to help them become the person they want to be. They must begin to write their own autobiographical narrative (Schechtman).

It has been said that it is not what happens to a person that really matters, but how that person responds to what happens to them that determines who they become. Every human being faces difficulties at some point in their life. Some people find ways to overcome those challenges and become better people because of what has happened to them. Others respond to the very same situations by becoming angry, bitter, or determined to seek revenge. Some even become self-destructive and slowly self-destruct or inflict harm upon others.

Self-constitution theory has to do with looking back at what has happened in one's life, identifying how they responded to those things and how their life has evolved to this point as a result. Then the person evaluates whether the course they are on is the path they want to be on and whether changes need to be made in order to shift the trajectory of their life. In other words, they must write their own story.

Part B: Whose Opinions/Contributions are Important? A Look at Standpoint Epistemology

Epistemology is the study of knowledge. Standpoint theory is presented as a way of empowering oppressed groups, of valuing their experiences, and of pointing toward a way to develop an "oppositional consciousness" according to Patricia Hill Collins (1989) and Chela Sandoval (2004). Historically speaking, the person or group in the position of power has been the one to make the rules, tell the story, or receive credit for the contribution or discovery. This person or group, operating from this position of power, disseminates the laws and writes the history in a way that is favorable to themselves and with little or no consideration or understanding of the viewpoints of those not in power. Thus, standpoint epistemology acknowledges that the viewpoint of the oppressed, the viewpoint of the minority, the viewpoint of women, is equally valid and should be considered in order to obtain a more balanced view of the world. In fact, standpoint theory goes a step further in asserting that the viewpoint of the oppressed may be more valid simply because it *has* to take all sides into account, not simply one's own. The oppressed does not have the luxury of only considering their own minority viewpoint, seeing that they live in a world where the majority viewpoint is in operation. They must be proficient in navigating more than one system in order to survive in a world that often does not acknowledge their viewpoint, let alone accept and embrace it.

I believe that as educators, it is our responsibility to help each of our students recognize that they are important and that their opinions and contributions are valuable.

This can be challenging at times, but as they begin to see themselves in the selections they read and in the people they learn about, this transformation can begin to take place.

Part C: Right or Wrong? A Look at Relativism versus Objectivism

Ethical relativism is the doctrine that the moral rightness and wrongness of actions vary from society to society and that there are not absolute universal moral standards on all men at all times (John Ladd). In his essay, “A Defense of Ethical Objectivism”, Louis P. Pojman breaks down Ladd’s argument into two theses and a conclusion. First is the Diversity Thesis which states that moral rules differ from society to society. Second is the Dependency Thesis which states that acts are right or wrong depending on the society from which they emanate. This leads Ladd to conclude that there are no absolute or objective moral standards that apply to all people everywhere. (1996)

So basically, Ladd asserts that whether something is right or wrong is relative—it depends upon the moral rules of the society of which a person is a part. Another way to put it is something is considered to be morally right if a person’s society has deemed it to be so and that this varies from society to society. Therefore, something that is considered to be morally wrong in one community could be considered socially acceptable in another. So there is no “one size fits all” in ethical relativism.

At the other end of the spectrum is objectivism. Objectivism is the doctrine that universally valid or true ethical principles do exist. (Plato, Kant) Louis Pojman takes the position that ethical relativism should be rejected. He believes that there are many qualified general ethical principles which are binding on all rational beings.

Pojman basically asserts that argument that there are some principles that are binding upon all human beings irrespective of the society to which they belong. This means that there are some things that are ethically and morally right as a standard for all human beings.

When helping children to think critically, it is imperative for them to be able to look at more than one side of an issue, not just their own. They should learn to think about and articulate their viewpoint, while at the same time, being able to hear and understand another person’s view. This skill is necessary for engaging in philosophical chairs, debates, discussions, conversations, and basic communication. It is also necessary for argumentative essay writing. (CC.1.4.6. 1)

Part D: How do we respond to things that we believe to be wrong? What is our responsibility in matters of injustice? A Look at Duty-Based Ethics

It is one thing to be able to determine whether a person’s actions or a particular situation is right or wrong. It is another thing altogether to determine how to respond to situations

we deem to be wrong or unjust, or whether to respond at all. Duty-based ethics theories are a form of deontological theories which address the foundational nature of our duty or obligation irrespective of the consequences of our actions.

17th century German philosopher Samuel Pufendorf asserts that there are basically three categories of duties:

1. Duty to God (know God and worship God)
2. Duty to self (develop skills and talents and do not hurt the body)
3. Duty to others (don't hurt others, treat them as equals, and help others)

British philosopher, W. D. Ross suggested a list of prima facie duties which arise out of moral conviction. His list includes the following:

- Fidelity: the duty to keep promises
- Reparation: the duty to compensate others when we harm them
- Gratitude: the duty to thank those who help us
- Justice: the duty to recognize merit
- Beneficence: the duty to improve the conditions of others
- Self-improvement: the duty to improve our virtue and intelligence
- Non-maleficence: the duty not to injure others

Sometimes a problem arises when a person has to choose between duties that are in conflict, but then this is exactly where the ability to think critically is crucial, isn't it? When students are able to recognize that they have obligations to God, self, and others, and that they may sometimes wrestle with how to best fulfill these obligations, especially in terms of how to treat and respond to others, they are beginning to think critically. This is what we want for them, as educators, because it is in the wrestling and struggling with challenging issues that students begin to develop character. They begin to understand who they are, what is important to them, and what they are willing to do to help create a world where human beings can live together in harmony.

Why Should I Teach This Unit?

The purpose of this unit is to give educators a tool by which to get students thinking, hopefully about topics that are relevant to them and about which they feel strongly. This curriculum is designed to ignite lively discussions and inspire passionate writing. In fact, this unit is a catalyst by which many more units can be developed. The unit is divided into four sub-sections, which can actually be considered entire units within themselves. The first sub-section, "Who Am I? Am I Who I Want to Be?" has five complete lesson plans included which can be used as a template to design lessons for the three remaining sub-sections. The suggested reading selections are listed and can all be accessed online.

Many of the selections can be used in more than one sub-section and the educator can use as many or as few as necessary to meet his/her needs. There are also suggested novels with philosophical themes for lesson extensions. A minimum of four weeks is required to complete all components of the the unit, but if the lessons are extended to include the study of a novel, then the unit can be extended for up to another four weeks.

There is a strong technology base for this curriculum. It is designed to be used with Google classroom (all assignments), Google forms (exit tickets), Kahoot (assessment/discussion questions), whatsthebigidea.com (video clips), and commonlit.org (free reading selections), but can easily be modified to be used in classes without student access to technology.

When we can get our students thinking about issues that are both important and relevant to them, there will never be an end to material to write about, debate about, and ultimately, do something about.

Objectives (Part A)

SWBAT determine the theme or central idea of the poems “Masks,” “Underface,” and “Yesees and Noees”

SWBAT create a Venn diagram comparing and contrasting the central ideas/themes of 2 Shel Silverstein poems, “Masks” and “Underface”

SWBAT cite evidence from each poem to support an analysis of what the the poets are saying about the disadvantages of hiding who you really are from people

SWBAT design a WordCloud using descriptive words to describe how beautiful they are

SWBAT create a T-chart depicting what things change as they get older and what things stay the same according to “Eleven”

SWBAT choose a position on the topic “Traits are more important than environmental influences in shaping who a person becomes” and cite evidence from the article to support it

SWBAT research the topic to find additional support for this argument

SWBAT write an argumentative essay responding to the question, “Are traits more important than environmental influences in shaping who a person becomes?”

Objectives (Parts B-D)

SWBAT analyze the character traits of the protagonist of the story IOT determine whether these traits cause them to behave in positive or negative ways.

SWBAT analyze the character traits of the protagonist of the story IOT determine whether these are traits or qualities they have or would like to have

SWBAT consider ethical questions about real-life decisions young people make IOT develop to skills to make good choices themselves

SWBAT generate multiple solutions for helping others when bullying occurs IOT identify concrete solutions for dealing with bullying situations

SWBAT collaborate with their peers IOT produce a digital presentation proposing a solution to a problem/challenge they face, such as bullying or peer pressure.

SWBAT compare/contrast the themes of two poems or short stories IOT identify ways people represent or misrepresent themselves.

SWBAT locate, organize, analyze, evaluate, synthesize, and ethically use information from a variety of sources and media IOT conduct research on a given topic

SWBAT analyze cyberbullying behaviors that “cross the line” IOT stop cyberbullying before it starts

SWBAT create a graphic display outlining the pros and cons of always telling the truth IOT write an argumentative essay defending a position

SWBAT justify a position by citing evidence IOT determine whether a character’s decisions or choices are ethically moral (right or wrong)

SWBAT justify a position by citing evidence IOT debate whether a person can change the way they are

Strategies

Students will...

1. Create a Venn diagram to compare/contrast the theme of two poems or short stories we have read in this unit.
2. Read several selections and analyze the character traits of the protagonist of the selection using a graphic organizer.
3. Watch video clips on the site <http://www.whatsthebigideaprogram.com> and identify examples of bullying, lying, or peer pressure
4. Collaborate to create a Power point or Google slides presentation proposing multiple solutions to the problems of bullying, lying, or peer pressure.
5. Statement line activity where students stand on a line if they agree with certain statements or if they are true for them.
6. Research a topic and write an argumentative essay. Possible topics include:
 - a) It is never okay to tell a lie.
 - b) It was easier to grow up when my parents were kids than it is for me now.
 - c) Parents should have to pay a fine when their kids skip school.
 - d) Adopted children should be given information about their natural parents before the age of 18.
 - e) Children who went to school in the United States but whose parents are undocumented should be able to apply for financial aid.(*Note: These topics will also work for philosophical chairs)
7. Research a topic and write an informational essay. Possible topics include:
 - a) The effects of bullying on students
 - b) The effect of peer pressure on students
8. Form two teams and debate the pros and cons of always telling the truth.
9. Create a graphic display using WordCloud to depict positive self-image
10. Philosophical Chairs: Debate-type activity where students attempt to persuade their classmates to see a situation from their perspective.
11. Discuss problems faced by characters in the selections we have read and determine if these problems are universal and how they would respond.
12. Write a poem expressing feelings about a topic covered in this unit.
13. Use Cornell notes when taking notes to capture important thoughts, details, answers to discussion questions, etc.
14. Use graphic organizers such as Venn diagrams, T-charts, and essay maps to organize thoughts.
15. Write in journals to activate thinking about a topic or reflect on a topic being discussed. Students will write for about 5 minutes and express their thoughts in 5-7 sentences.
16. Complete a Tic Tac Toe Book Report Choice Board to respond to one of the novels from the list.

Daily Lesson Plans for Critical Thinkers Are World Changers
90-minute ELA Block

Part A—Identity: Who Am I? Am I Who I Want to Be?

Lesson 1

Objectives	<p>SWBAT...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine the theme or central idea of the poems “Masks,” “Underface,” and “Yesees and Noees” • Create a Venn diagram comparing and contrasting the central ideas/themes of 2 Shel Silverstein poems, “Masks” and “Underface” • Cite evidence from each poem to support an analysis of what the the poets are saying about the disadvantages of hiding who you really are from people
Standards	<p>CC.1.3.6. A Determine a theme or central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.</p> <p>CC.1.2.6. B Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences and/or generalizations drawn from the text.</p>
Reading Selections (CommonLit.org)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. “Masks” by Shel Silverstein 2. “Underface” by Shel Silverstein 3. “Yesees and Noees” by Shel Silverstein
Activation/Journal You Do (Independent)	<p><u>Question:</u> Based on your own experiences, do people in the real world feel pressured to be like everyone else? Have you ever pretended to be a certain way in order to fit in? If so, how?</p>
Activities We Do (Whole Group)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Close Reading, “Masks” (w/Guiding Questions) 2. Assessment Questions 1-3 (Respond using Kahoot) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A. Part A: Which statement best explains the metaphorical meaning of blue skin in the poem? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) In the poem, only two people in the whole world have blue skin, which means that they must be soul mates b) In the poem, blue skin is such a common trait that people must wear masks in order to appear unique

c) **In the poem, blue skin represents a quality that people are afraid to share even though it is an important part of their identity**

d) In the poem, blue skin represents the sadness that people try to hide by always being polite and keeping smiles on their faces

B. Part B: Which quote from the poem best supports the answer to part A?

a) “She had blue skin”

b) **“kept it hid”**

c) “searched for blue”

d) “never knew”

C. How does the illustration contribute to the meaning of the poem?

a) **The size of the masks in the illustration emphasizes how hard people try to hide their true selves**

b) The simplicity of the drawing shows that being your true self is easy to do

c) The masks facing opposite directions in the illustration show that lying will get you nowhere

d) The different hairstyles in the drawing show that just because two people have blue skin doesn't mean they are alike in every way

3. Discussion Questions 1, 3 (Cornell notes)

A. In the poem, the two characters hide their blue skin from others. In your opinion, why do they hide this quality?

B. How does this poem help you think about what it means to be a good friend?

4. Close Reading, “Underface” (w/Guiding Questions)

A. The speaker's underface is

a. on display

b. happier

c. **hidden**

d. ugly

- B. The speaker of the poem most likely feels
- a. **insecure**
 - b. confident
 - c. uncaring
 - d. anxious

5. Assessment Questions 1-2 (Respond using Kahoot)

- A. Which of the following best describes the theme of the poem?

a) **People often hide how they truly feel**

b) When people hide who they are, it makes them sad

c) It's important to accept people for who they are

d) Wearing a mask can give a person strength

- B. Which of the following best identifies what the speaker means by "outside face" (line 1)?

a) Their true self

b) The mask that they wear

c) The face that they cannot hide

d) **The face that the world sees**

6. Discussion Questions 1-2 (Cornell notes)

- A. Do you have an outside face and an "underface?" Why do you show some things to the world and hide others?

- B. In the context of the poem, can you hide your emotions and how you truly feel? Cite evidence from this text, your own experience, and other literature.

7. Close Reading, "Yesees and Noees" Guiding Question—The "Thinkforyourselves" are successful because...

a) They don't take unnecessary risks

b) **They don't listen to anyone else**

c) They are smarter than the Yesees and Noees

d) They are not afraid of anything

8. Assessment Questions 1-3 (Respond using Kahoot)

- A. Which of the following best describes the theme of the poem?

- a) It is better to be brave than fearful of the unknown
- b) Thinking for yourself is the best way to live your life**
- c) Those who think for themselves tend to live longer
- d) It can be dangerous for a person to be adventurous.

B. How do the “Yesees” compare to the “Noees?”

- a) The “Yesees” are fun, while the “Noees” are boring
- b) The “Yesees” die young, while the “Noees” grow old
- c) The “Yesees” are polite, while the “Noees” are rude
- d) The “Yesees” are reckless, while the “Noees” are cautious**

C. How does the last line of the poem contribute to the speaker’s point of view?

- a) It reveals that the speaker thinks that others should be independent thinkers**
- b) It reveals that the speaker is a “Thinkforoyurselfee”
- c) It reveals the speaker’s dislike for “Yesees” and “Noees”
- d) It reveals that the speaker is not an independent thinker

D. Discussion Questions 1-3 (Cornell notes)

A. Are you a “Yesee”, a “Noee”, or a “Thinkforyourselfee?” Why?

B. In the context of the poem, can we control our fate? Do you think you get to choose whether you’re a “Yesee”, a “Noee”, or a Thinkforyourselfee?” Why or why not?

C. In the context of the poem, what makes you who you are? Do you think your decision-making process is an important part of your identity? Why or why not?

Application You Do (Small Group)	Working with a small group, create a Venn diagram comparing and contrasting the central ideas/themes of 2 Shel Silverstein poems, “Masks” and “Underface.”
Assessment/Exit Ticket You Do (Independent)	<u>Question:</u> Based on our reading today, what do you believe are some disadvantages of hiding who you really are from other people? Cite evidence from the poems to support your response.
Afterschool/Homework	Summarize the theme/message Shel Silverstein is trying to communicate through these poems.

Lesson 2

Objectives	SWBAT... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design a WordCloud using descriptive words to describe how beautiful they are • Create a T-chart depicting what things change as they get older and what things stay the same according to “Eleven”
Standards	<p>CC.1.3.6. A Determine a theme or central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.</p> <p>CC.1.2.6. B Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences and/or generalizations drawn from the text.</p>
Reading Selections (CommonLit.org)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. “Eleven” by Sandra Cisneros 2. “East 149th St. (Symphony for a Black Girl)” by Teri Ellen Cross Davis
Activation/Journal You Do (Independent)	<u>Question:</u> What do you like most about yourself? What are you the most proud of?
Activities We Do (Whole Group)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Close Reading, “Eleven” (w/Guiding Questions) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A. How does the speaker describe growing up? (par.3) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) You become more mature with every year.

b) **You carry your previous years with you.**

c) You no longer feel like a child.

d) You are no longer intimidated by other adults.

B. Why does Mrs. Price give Rachel the sweater? (par. 10)

a) She wants to embarrass Rachel.

b) She thinks Rachel is cold and could use it.

c) She saw Rachel wear it yesterday.

d) **She believes it belongs to Rachel.**

2. Assessment Questions 1-4 (Respond using Kahoot)

A. Part A: Which of the following statements best identifies a theme of the text?

a) Adults always think they know better because they are older.

b) **We are shaped by our past ages, even as we grow up and change.**

c) When people grow up they become more brave and confident.

d) Everyone should be given special treatment when it is their birthday.

B. Part B: Which quotes from the text best supports the answer to Part A?

a) **“And you don’t feel eleven at all. You feel like you are still ten. And you are—underneath the year that makes you eleven.” (Par. 1)**

b) **“‘Of course it’s yours,’ Mrs. Price says. ‘I remember you wearing it once.’ Because she is older, and the teacher, she’s right, and I’m not.” (Par. 10)**

c) **“Mama is making a cake for me tonight, and when Papa comes home, everybody will sing Happy birthday, happy birthday to you.” (Par. 11)**

d) **“I wish I was anything but eleven, because I want today to be far away already, far away like a runaway balloon.” (Par. 21)**

- C. In paragraph 3, Rachel says, “Because the way you grow old is kind of like an onion or like the rings inside a tree trunk or like my little wooden dolls that fit one inside the other.” Which of the following statements best explains the quoted simile?
- a) The narrator cannot make up her mind about what it means to be older, and so she does not know what it means to be herself.
 - b) The narrator feels overwhelmed by how quickly she is growing up, and she is afraid that she does not act her current age.
 - c) She believes that everyone is just hiding how old they really are behind different ages, or layers.
 - d) The narrator thinks of growing up as developing layers, instead of becoming an entirely different person as you age.**
- D. How does Rachel react to being told to put on the red sweater?
- a) Rachel cries after putting on the old red sweater, but she is more upset with herself for not speaking up for herself like an eleven-year-old.**
 - b) Rachel refuses to put on the old red sweater and cries like a small child when her teacher scolds her for her disobedience.
 - c) Rachel stubbornly ignores her teacher because she hates Mrs. Price, who is mean and picks on her for no reason.
 - d) Rachel cries after putting on the old red sweater because she is embarrassed about having to wear her old clothes.

3. Discussion Questions 1-4 (Cornell notes)

- A. Describe a moment when you felt younger than your age. How did this influence your actions or emotions?

	<p>B. What does it mean to be grown up? How Rachel think she will change with age? Explain if you agree or disagree with Rachel’s ideas about growing up?</p> <p>C. In your opinion, why does Rachel get so upset about the red sweater?</p> <p>D. In the context of the text, what makes you who you are? Do you think age determines the person you are? How do you change as you age?</p> <p>(NOTE: For the next selection, and the remaining selections in this unit, refer to the CommonLit.org website for the Guiding Questions, Assessment Questions, and the Discussion Questions, or you can create your own.)</p> <p>4. Close Reading, “East 149th St. (Symphony for a Black Girl), (w/Guiding Questions)</p> <p>5. Assessment Questions 1-6 (Respond using Kahoot)</p> <p>6. Discussion Questions 1-3 (Cornell notes)</p>
<p>Application You Do (Small Group)</p>	<p><u>Directions:</u> Choose 1 of the following questions and work with a small group of 3-4 students to respond.</p> <p>1. What do you like about yourself? What words would you use to describe yourself? Design a WordCloud that describes how beautiful you are.</p> <p>2. What things make you who you are? What things change as you get older? What things stay the same? Create a T-chart depicting which things change and which things stay the same?</p>
<p>Assessment/Exit Ticket You Do (Independent)</p>	<p><u>Question:</u> Answer the question you did not answer in the small group activity.</p>
<p>Afterschool/Homework</p>	<p>Question: What things about yourself would you like to change? (Be honest with yourself.) What steps could you take to begin to make changes in yourself, even if they are very small changes?</p>

Lesson 3

Objectives	SWBAT... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose a position on the topic “Traits are more important than environmental influences in shaping who a person becomes” and cite evidence from the article to support it • Research the topic to find additional support for this argument
Standards	<p>CC.1.2.6. A Determine the central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.</p> <p>CC.1.4.6. S Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research, applying grade-level reading standards for literature and literary nonfiction.</p>
Reading Selections (CommonLit.org)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. “Don’t Hate the Trait” by BirdBrain Science 2. “How Do I Look?” by BirdBrain Science
Activation/Journal You Do (Independent)	<p><u>Question:</u> What traits or characteristics did you inherit from your parents? Which ones do you like? Which ones do you dislike?</p>
Activities We Do (Whole Group)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Close Reading, “Don’t Hate the Trait” (w/Guiding Questions) 2. Assessment Questions 1-5 (Respond using Kahoot) 3. Discussion Questions 1-3 (Cornell notes) 4. Close Reading, “How Do I Look?” (w/Guiding Questions) 5. Assessment Questions 1-5 (Respond using Kahoot) 6. Discussion Questions 1-3 (Cornell notes)
Application You Do (Small Group)	<p><u>Directions:</u> Choose 1 of the following questions and work with a small group of 6-8 students to respond.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Re-read both articles looking for evidence to support the assertion: Traits are more important than environmental influences in shaping who a person becomes. Make a list to support your claim. 2. Re-read both articles looking for evidence to support the assertion: Environmental factors are more important than traits in shaping who a person becomes. Make a list to support your claim.

Assessment/Exit Ticket You Do (Independent)	<u>Question:</u> In the context of these 2 articles, are traits or environmental influences more important in shaping who a person becomes? Cite evidence from these texts, your own experience, other literature, or history in your response.
Afterschool/Homework	Continue to research evidence to support your claim in preparation for a philosophical chairs debate tomorrow.

Lesson 4

Objectives	<p>SWBAT...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Choose a position on the topic “Traits are more important than environmental influences in shaping who a person becomes” and cite evidence from the article to support it Defend this argument in 60 seconds or less
Standards	<p>CC.1.4.6. H Introduce and state an opinion on a topic.</p> <p>CC.1.4.6. I Use clear reasons and relevant evidence to support claims, using credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic.</p> <p>CC.1.5.6. A Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions, on grade-level topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.</p>
Reading Selections (CommonLit.org)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> “Don’t Hate the Trait” by BirdBrain Science “How Do I Look?” by BirdBrain Science
Activation/Journal You Do (Independent)	Students will use this time to review their notes along with the guidelines for the philosophical chairs activity handout (passed out by the teacher)
Activities We Do (Whole Group)	<p><u>Philosophical Chairs:</u> (Practice activity)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher will review the rules and guidelines and post the discussion statement on the board: “Traits are more important than environmental influences in shaping who a person becomes.” Students will help to arrange the classroom chairs into a “U” shape. Students who agree with this statement will sit on one side; students who disagree

	<p>will sit on the opposite side. Students who are unsure will sit in the middle.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher will act as the moderator and will designate a student as the timekeeper to ensure that students speak for 60 seconds or less. (Refer to detailed website/powerpoint/video for how to conduct philosophical chairs)
Application You Do (Small Group)	<p><u>Reflection Discussion:</u> Did you enjoy this activity? What did you learn? Will you prepare differently next time? If yes, how will you do this?</p>
Assessment/Exit Ticket You Do (Independent)	<p><u>Written Reflection:</u> How was your position strengthened, weakened, or changed altogether?</p>
Afterschool/Homework	<p><u>More Reflection:</u> Write down 3 questions or comments about today's activity.</p>

Lesson 5

Objectives	<p>SWBAT...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Write an argumentative essay responding to the question, "Are traits more important than environmental influences in shaping who a person becomes?"
Standards	<p>CC.1.5.6. A Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions, on grade-level topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.</p> <p>CC.1.4.6. H Introduce and state an opinion on a topic.</p> <p>CC.1.4.6. G Write arguments to support claims.</p>
Reading Selections (CommonLit.org)	None
Activation/Journal You Do (Independent)	<p>Complete a graphic organizer (essay map) outlining three main ideas supporting your response to the prompt, "Are traits more important than environmental influences in shaping who a person becomes?"</p>

Activities We Do (Whole Group)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reflect on yesterday’s philosophical chairs activity. Allow two or three more responses from students who did not share yesterday. Teacher will give feedback, recognizing students who made strong arguments and the arguments themselves. 2. Answer any questions about the activity or the essay map
Application You Do (Small Group)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students will work in small homogeneous groups of students arguing the same position to get feedback about their essay maps. 2. Students will begin to write the rough draft of their essay.
Assessment/Exit Ticket You Do (Independent)	Continue working on essay.
Afterschool/Homework	Complete rough/first draft of essay

Appendix A: Suggested Reading Selections (NOTE: All selections are found on CommonLit.org. Additionally, all selections, assessment questions, and discussion questions can be printed out as handouts or worksheets if students do not have access to technology.)

Part A—Identity: Who Am I? Am I Who I Want to Be?

1. “Masks” by Shel Silverstein
2. “Underface” by Shel Silverstein
3. “Yesees and Noees” by Shel Silverstein
4. “Eleven” by Sandra Cisneros
5. “Don’t Hate the Trait” by BirdBrain Science
6. “How Do I Look” by BirdBrain Science

Part B—Significance: Does My Voice Matter? Do I Matter?

1. “The Lighthouse Lamp” by Margaret E. Sangster
2. “Stop the Atlantic Express” by Kate Sharp and Sarvinder Naborhaus
3. “Tornado Coming” by Dick Donley
4. “Disaster on the East River: When the General Slocum Caught Fire” by Mary E. Glucksman
5. “Joining the Fight” by Marcia Amidon Lusted

6. “Justice for All” by Lynn Reymarz
7. “The Underground Railroad” by USHistory.org
8. “Joan of Arc: France’s Young Tragic Hero” by David White
9. “Malala Yousafzai: A Normal, Yet Powerful Girl” by NPR Staff
10. “Tuesday of the Other June” by Norma Fox Mazer

Part C—Truth: Right or Wrong?

1. “The Prophet Khizer” by Elizabeth Laird
2. “The Thief and his Mother” by Aesop
3. “The Ant and the Dove” by Aesop
4. “The Boy Who Cried Wolf” by Aesop
5. “The Anklet” by Neil Philip
6. “The Man in the Well” by Ira Sher
7. “Little Things Are Big” by Jesus Colon
8. “The Worst Sin” by Joshua Salik
9. “Feathers” by Anonymous
10. “A Teen and a Trolley Reveal Society’s Dark Side” by Bethany Brookshire

Part D—Choices: How Do I Create Change?

1. “The Many and the Few” by J. Patrick Lewis
2. “Anger as Inspiration” by Sami Awad
3. “A Kenyan Teen’s Discovery” by Nina Gregory
4. “Growing Trees for Kenya” by Elizabeth Cregan
5. “Marley Dias: The 13 Year Activist and Author” by Barrett Smith
6. “Cesar Chavez: His Fight for the Farm Workers” by Barbara Bloom
7. “Dr. M. L. K. Changing America” by Barbara Radner
8. “President Obamas Address to America’s School Children” by President Barack Obama
9. “Malala Yousafzai: A Normal, Yet Powerful Girl” by NPR Staff
10. “The Underground Railroad” by USHistory.org
11. “Joan of Arc: France’s Young Tragic Hero” by David White

Suggested Novels:

The Skin I’m In by Sharon Flake

I Am Malala: How One Girl Stood Up for Education and Changed the World by Malala Yousafzai and Patricia McCormick

Wonder by R.J. Palacio

Speak by Laurie Halse Anderson (7th and 8th graders)

Stella by Starlight by Sharon M. Draper

The Breadwinner Trilogy by Deborah Ellis

I Am Nujood, Age 10 and Divorced by Nujood Ali with Dephine Mainoui

Appendix B: Internet Resources:

<https://www.commonlit.org>

Links to all the online reading selections, discussion questions, and assessments

<https://whatsthebigideaprogram.com>

Introduces middle school students to philosophy through film. Video clips on topics such as:

- Bullying
- Lying
- Peer Pressure
- Friendship
- Environmental Ethics

<https://fmsavid.weebly.com/philosophical-chairs.html>

Explanation of how to conduct philosophical chairs and Socratic seminars
Template and rubric for Cornell notes

<https://www.wordclouds.com>

How to create a Word Cloud

<http://www.bloomstaxonomy.org/Blooms%20Taxonomy%20questions.pdf>

Bloom's Taxonomy

<http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/interactives/essaymap/>

Graphic Organizers- Essay Map

https://www.eduplace.com/graphicorganizer/pdf/tchart_eng.pdf

Graphic Organizer- T-chart

<https://www.eduplace.com/graphicorganizer/pdf/venn.pdf>

Graphic Organizer-Venn Diagram

<http://www.literacyleader.com/sites/default/files/Character%20Graphic%20Organizers.pdf>

Character Webs

<http://www.kahoot.com/>

Teacher can create their own quizzes or review questions or use one created by another teacher. Students can also play review games with each other.

http://whatsthebigideaprogram.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Activities.REV_.pdf

Statement Line Activity

Rubrics

- Argumentative Essay
https://ms67ela.weebly.com/uploads/4/2/8/2/42829211/6_argumentative.pdf
- Informational Essay
<http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/printouts/Essay%20Rubric.pdf>

Tic Tac Toe Choice Board Reading Project

5th – 8th Grade ELA

Name _____

Due Date _____

The Assignment:

Complete any three activities from the Tic Tac Toe Choice Board based on the book you read this quarter. If you read more than one book, you may choose your favorite book for this project.

Please note: Not all of these choices will work with non-fiction books. Choose wisely!

Tic Tac Toe Board Choices

<p>Pretend your novel is being made into a movie and you get to create the music soundtrack. What five songs would you include? Write an explanation for each song: Name of song, who sings it, what the song is about, why you have chosen it, and how the song connects to the events in this novel. Each explanation must be at least 2 sentences long, for a total of 10 sentences.</p>	<p>Write a summary of what you have read. Include basic literary information, such as character(s), setting(s), plot (conflict and resolution), point of view, theme(s), and anything else that would be beneficial to the reader in better understanding what has happened. The summary must be a minimum of 10 sentences.</p>	<p>As a literary agent, write a letter to a publishing company designed to persuade them to publish this book. Give reasons to publish the book using text evidence from the novel, including the page number in parenthesis. The letter must follow the correct format and include a minimum of three paragraphs.</p>
<p>Create a “WANTED” poster for the antagonist of your book. Make sure that the poster is accurate and write a 4-6 sentence paragraph explaining why he or she is wanted. Be sure to include a description and picture of the character.</p>	<p>Write a letter to the author of your book. Explain why you chose the book, what you learned, what you liked about the book and why, what you disliked about the book and why, and ask the author at least 2 questions. The letter must follow the correct format and be a minimum of 3 paragraphs.</p>	<p>Create a cartoon strip depicting a key event in your book. Cartoon strip must have at least 6 frames, and they must be artistic as well as colorful. Captions for each frame must be included. There must be evidence of a beginning, middle, and end to the scene chosen for the cartoon.</p>
<p>Compare and contrast this book with another book you have read. Use Venn diagram or T-chart and include at least 10 detailed similarities and 10 detailed differences.</p>	<p>Quote 3 passages from the book that you really connect with. Include the page number in parenthesis. Explain what makes these passages so meaningful to you. Each explanation must be at least 3 sentences.</p>	<p>Design a timeline for the important events in your book. Your timeline should have a minimum of 15 events and a small caption about each event.</p>

Name _____

Date _____

Grading Rubric:

Each square on the Tic Tac Toe board is worth 30 points. The remaining 10 points will be awarded for creativity and neatness. Each bulleted item is worth 10 points.

<p>Music Soundtrack</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 songs chosen • Explanation for each song (why included and how it connects to events) • Minimum 2 sentences per explanation= 10 sentences total 	<p>Summary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Character (s), setting(s), plot (conflict and resolution) • Point of view, theme(s), and anything else that would be beneficial to the reader • Minimum 10 sentences 	<p>Literary Agent Letter</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Persuasive letter • Reasons with evidence and page numbers • Minimum 3 paragraphs
<p>“WANTED” Poster</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accurate information on poster • 4-6 sentence paragraph explaining why character is “wanted” • Character description and picture 	<p>Letter to the Author</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explains why you chose the book, what you learned, what you liked about the book and why, what you disliked and why • Asks the author at least 2 questions • Minimum 3 paragraphs in correct format 	<p>Cartoon Strip of Key Event</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 6 frames depicting a beginning, middle, and end of a scenario • Artistic and colorful frames • Captions in each frame
<p>Compare and Contrast</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Venn diagram or T-chart • 10 detailed similarities • 10 detailed differences 	<p>Connecting with Quotes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 passages with page numbers • Explanation of meaningfulness • Minimum of 3 sentences per explanation = 9 sentences 	<p>Timeline</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depicts important events • Minimum 15 events • Small caption about each item = 15 captions

Choice 1 (30 points)	
Choice 2 (30 points)	
Choice 3 (30 points)	
Creativity/Neatness (10 points)	
TOTAL POINTS	

Reference Books for Teachers

The Thinking Toolbox: Thirty-five Lessons That Will Build Your Reasoning Skills
by Nathaniel Bluedorn

The Fallacy Detective: Thirty-Eight Lessons on How to Recognize Bad Reasoning
by Nathaniel Bluedorn

Philosophy for Kids: 40 Fun Questions that Help You Wonder...About Everything
by David White

Philosophy for Teens: Questioning Life's Big Ideas by Sharon Kaye

Big Ideas for Little Kids: Teaching Philosophy Through Children's Literature by Thomas Wartenberg

What Should Danny Do? by Adir Levy

Children's Book of Philosophy by DK

A Young Person's Guide to Philosophy by DK

Appendix C: Bibliography

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Appendix D: Common Core Standards and Eligible Content

Key Ideas and Details: Main Idea

CC.1.2.6. A Determine the central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.

E06.B-K.1.1.2 Determine a central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through relevant details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.

Key Ideas and Details: Text Analysis

CC.1.2.6. B Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences and/or generalizations drawn from the text.

E06.B-K.1.1.1 Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences and/or generalizations drawn from the text.

Integration of Knowledge: Diverse Media

CC.1.2.6. G Integrate information presented in different media or formats (e.g. visually, quantitatively) as well as in words to develop a coherent understanding of a topic or issue.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: Evaluating Arguments

CC.1.2.6. H Evaluate an author's argument by examining claims and determining if they are supported by evidence.

E06.B-C.3.1.1 Trace and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, distinguishing claims that are supported by reasons and evidence from claims that are not (e.g., fact/opinion, bias).

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: Analysis Across Texts

CC.1.2.6. I Examine how two authors present similar information in different types of text.

E06.B-C.3.1.2 Compare and contrast one author's presentation of events with that of another (e.g., a memoir written by and a biography on the same person).

Key Ideas and Details: Theme

CC.1.3.6. A Determine a theme or central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.

E06.A-K.1.1.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through relevant details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.

Key Ideas and Details: Text Analysis

CC.1.3.6. B Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences and/or generalizations drawn from the text.

E06.A-K.1.1.1 Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences and/or generalizations drawn from the text.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: Sources of Information

CC.1.3.6. G Compare and contrast the experiences of reading a story, drama, or poem to listening to or viewing an audio, video, or live version of the text, including contrasting

what is “seen” and “heard” when reading the text to what is perceived when listening or watching.

CC.1.4.6. G Write arguments to support claims.

CC.1.4.6. H Introduce and state an opinion on a topic.

CC.1.4.6. I Use clear reasons and relevant evidence to support claims, using credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic.

CC.1.4.6. S Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research, applying grade-level reading standards for literature and literary nonfiction.

CC.1.4.6. V Conduct short research projects to answer a question, drawing on several sources and refocusing the inquiry when appropriate.

Comprehension and Collaboration: Collaborative Discussion

CC.1.5.6. A Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions, on grade-level topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.

Comprehension and Collaboration: Critical Listening

CC.1.5.6. B Delineate a speaker’s argument and specific claims by identifying specific reasons and evidence, and recognize arguments or claims not supported by factual evidence.

Comprehension and Collaboration: Evaluating Information

CC.1.5.6. C Interpret information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g. visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how it contributes to a topic, text, or issue under study

Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas: Multimedia

CC.1.5.6. F Include multimedia components and visual displays in presentations to clarify information