



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative

2016 Volume III: "Over the Rainbow": Fantasy Lands, Dream Worlds, and Magic Kingdoms

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## **Easing on Down the Road: Reading Critically, Writing Fantastically**

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by Brandon Barr

### **Unit Overview**

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Having had the opportunity to read a lot of critical writing about *The Wizard of Oz*, it is evident that L. Frank Baum, author of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, and the authors of later derivations of the *Oz* narrative have a mischievous agenda. The list below clearly illuminates the true intention of Baum and others in their creation of *Oz* as a fantastic world:

Top Ten Reasons Why *The Wizard of Oz* is Really an Allegory for Teaching

1. Convincing others to realize that they already possess the ability that we see in them
2. Sometimes big stuff happens, and you weren't really expecting it, but you handle it with bounce-in-your-step, style and grace
3. Feeling like Dorothy when she enters *Oz*, overwhelmed by a great sense of wonderment, taking it all in with wide eyes-especially at the start of a school year.
4. Needing magic shoes because there is no time for sitting down till the journey is complete
5. Meeting interesting characters along the way, each with their own flaws and endearing qualities
6. Feeling the need to just burst into song because the moment seems to call for it
7. Dreaming of slaying some wicked witches
8. Being told what to do by a big talking head and realizing he wasn't a wiz
9. No one believes your fantastic stories
10. Yearning for home when the journey is complicated

All humor aside, *The Wizard of Oz* is a good starting point for thinking and learning about fantasy worlds. The question that *The Wiz* and Michael Jackson got me to groove to in my research is how to *ease students down the road* of being able to read like a critic and write a fantasy that rivals the richness of *Oz* or the darkness of *Anthem*, a dystopic fantasy by Ayn Rand.<sup>1</sup> It is a process that is a journey that requires authorial mentorship in order to see how the work is done. To put it into the realm of *Oz*, students need to see the little man behind the cloak of the Great Wizard. Critical writing about reading and composing fictional writing like an author isn't something to fear or think that it can't be done. Because like Dorothy, I know that my students have the capacity already in them to read critically and write like an author; it is just a matter of putting the right conditions in place for students to make the same realization.

## Content Objectives

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In order to explore the author's craft, several new concepts for students will be introduced in this unit: Freytag's Pyramid, the concept of reading and responding to fantastic literature like a critic, and writing like an author of speculative fiction. The unit will start with an introduction to Freytag's Pyramid as a means of plotting the events of a narrative. Freytag's Pyramid, a diagram that is commonly used to analyze the plot of a story, will be introduced to get students to think about how fantasy worlds are created in fiction and to adopt literary language to discuss how plot progresses. Students will read and view the exposition of *Wizard of Oz* to understand how a framing device can work to launch a dream world. In order to better understand some of the underlying meaning, students will be introduced to the concept of what it means to read like a critic (see the Appendix). After reading, viewing and discussing the opening of *Wizard of Oz*, students will read modified literary criticisms of the opening of *Oz* based on readings that were done in seminar. Students will read this criticisms to not only better understand the text and film, but to begin to understand what it means to write about literature like a critic.

From *Oz*, the focus of the unit will move on to a specific type of fantasy land, the dystopia. Characteristics of dystopian societies will be taught as the class engages in a study of *Anthem*. It is hoped that by delving into the dystopian world of *Anthem*, that students will understand the key elements of dystopia and a different construction of alternative world from *Oz*. As we engage in our study of *Anthem*, my students and I will practice our craft as readers as we look at modified critical responses to Ayn Rand and *Anthem*. Students will write in response to *Anthem* emulating the style and substance of the critical responses that are read in class. In this phase of the unit, students will also practice their craft as writers to analyze and produce their own pieces of science fiction, horror, fantasy or utopian/dystopian literature. These writing exercises will lend themselves to a rich source of writing material with the goal of producing a polished piece of fiction writing by the end of the unit.

In order to understand how students have grown in their capacity to read like a critic, students will be provided with a clean copy of "All Summer in a Day" by Ray Bradbury. Students will read and annotate the text. They will identify the parts of the story that correlate with Freytag's Pyramid and respond to it using the critical language that was introduced in the unit. Students will also demonstrate their knowledge by composing a story using Freytag's Pyramid as a planning tool from on the writing exercises that were done in class during our reading of *Anthem*.

## Rationale

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Mark Twain Elementary School is a traditional pre K-8th grade public school in the Chicago Public School system. The student population consists of roughly 1,119 students, of which 83% are characterized as low income. Because of such a high poverty rate, Twain is eligible for Title I funding. The population is also roughly 83% Hispanic and 16% White with a large population of Polish speaking students. Students that receive special education services account for roughly ten percent of the student population; and students that receive bilingual services account for another 16% of the student population.<sup>2</sup> Given these statistics, it is evident that students at my school possess a wide variety of abilities and learning needs that must be

addressed in order for students to be successful academically.

Formative data that I have collected from students suggests that the one of the most effective units that I teach them is “Playing with Poetry.” It is a unit that I created at the Yale National Initiative and modified for sixth grade students. There are many reasons why this is my student’s favorite and most successful unit. In their end-of-the-year exit surveys, students have expressed that they are proud of the poetry books that they produced because it expresses their feelings, demonstrates learning of poetic devices, and plays with text rather than marks things wrong or corrects error. It is hoped that the success of the poetry unit will be replicated by building student’s willingness to respond critically to text and play with some of the structures that they see being used by stories, by critics, and by authors.

This unit will complement the work that is expected of students in other units throughout the school year. For example, the students and I explore the harmful impact of the industrial food industry. In another unit, we think about the impact of global warming and how key changes need to occur now to avoid disasters later. Part of the critical thinking in each of these units requires students to imagine changes that could potentially occur as a result of our collective inaction. The capacity to imagine and to speculate is key to envisioning what could happen should we not make drastic changes to how we conduct our daily lives. This unit builds student ability to reason critically that will enhance the success of other units.

## Tracking the Journey into a Fantasyland

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During the *Over the Rainbow* seminar, Joe Roach suggested that the structure of a story consists of a series of impacts in time. He pushed this idea further to suggest that writers follow structures to arrange these series of impacts into a story arc of beginning, middle and an ending that are dependent on one another to tell a story. A more codified version of the impacts of time and the story arc that Joe Roach addressed in seminar can be found in Freytag's Pyramid which consists of exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution. By looking for these parts in text and planning with knowledge of these parts, students can identify and create a roadmap for storytelling. By also understanding the conventions of storytelling, students can turn away from or break the conventions in order to achieve a desired effect. As Professor Roach so eloquently stated in seminar, strategic instruction of structures will allow for creativity to occur as talented artists turn away from what is expected as they carefully craft their own writing.

### Exploring Literature using Freytag’s Pyramid

Freytag’s Pyramid is a good starting point for exploring narrative structure in the unit. Quesenberry and Coolsen looked closely at the history and structure of Freytag’s Pyramid. They note that Freytag was closely influenced by Aristotle’s dramatic theory, which suggested that plot depended on a beginning, middle, and end. Freytag took that knowledge and moved toward a more precise representation of plot based on the five-act structure first developed by Renaissance dramatists such as William Shakespeare.<sup>3</sup> Quesenberry and Coolsen eloquently explain how drama is divided into five parts called acts with specific parts: exposition, complication, climax, reversal, and denouement:

#### Act 1: Exposition

Act 1 introduces characters, establishes time and setting, and explains past events and circumstances. The basic conflict is revealed, leading to dramatic tension between opposing forces such as a protagonist (principal character) and an antagonist (opposing character). The first act ends with an inciting moment, which sets the story in motion beginning with the rising action of complications.

### **Act 2: Complication**

This stage becomes more complex. Interests clash and plans are made as action rises and tension mounts. The protagonist's effort to reach his or her goal is complicated by additional conflicts and obstacles. Frustration builds as opposing forces and circumstances intensify.

### **Act 3: Climax**

The development of the conflict reaches a high point. This turning point for the protagonist could lead to victory or defeat. A change has happened that is for better or for worse. In a comedy, things have gone badly for the protagonist and will now go well for him or her. If it is a tragedy, things will go from good to bad for the protagonist.

### **Act 4: Reversal**

The consequences of the climactic turning point play out. This falling action is a result of the reversal that occurred after the climax when the protagonist either won or lost against the antagonist. Momentum slows as the characters head toward a final resolution. In a comedy, it looks like all can be saved. In a tragedy, it looks like all may be lost.

### **Act 5: Denouement**

The conflict is resolved, creating normalcy for the characters and a sense of release of tension and anxiety. The comedy ends with the protagonist being better off than at the outset of the story. On the other hand, the tragedy ends in catastrophe with the protagonist being worse off. <sup>4</sup>

Significantly, the purpose of Quesenbery and Coolsen's research was not to map out great tragedies. They were focusing on the characteristics of what makes for a good Superbowl ad.<sup>5</sup> This is significant because it almost offers a defense for why it may be beneficial to pursue using literature and fantasy in a strategic way in teaching. Many creative endeavors require the ability to create carefully crafted narrative that follows structures that can be taught.

Professor Roach's suggestion that narratives can also be construed according to their impacts in time is almost as important as Freytag's Pyramid. This idea is especially true for many of the new hybrid forms of literature that do not follow a traditional linear structure. Researchers are looking for novel ways to visually represent: "plot in all manner of stories, including those that are not sequential, and in any case to explore the inter-related roles of various story elements such as characters, objects, events and transitions in space and time."<sup>6</sup> With new technologies that emerge such as stories in which you may choose-your-own-ending or texts that move into the digital realm [video games, website content, stories with multiple flashbacks or events presented out of sequence], thinking about plot as a series of impacts in time is helpful because students can string meaningful impacts together to create equally powerful narrative.

## Entering the Dream World

The ability to speculate and imagine is also key to innovation. Through these writing experiences, I hope that students begin to wonder and think about what else is possible. This mindset allows students to think differently about the problems that they face in their world and in their writing. In seminar, the question of why fantasy came up. Professor Roach suggested a correlation between paracosm in young children and future success. Research indicates that paracosms, or ornate, richly detailed imaginary worlds, are a powerful way to envision the future and be proactive about changes that need to happen in the not-too-distant-future.<sup>7</sup> In the article “Can Science Fiction Help Us Dream Our Way out of Disaster?,” Claire Evans postures that creating science fiction can help to create the cognitive dissonance that is needed to tackle hopeless and potential future catastrophes; her discussion of the growth of cli-fi, or climate fiction, is just one area in which dreaming about the future may help to deal with a major problem.<sup>8</sup>

For adolescents that are so grounded in reality, it is a challenge to get students to transition or create dream worlds of pieces of science fiction, or fantasy, or magical realism. Simply put, the question becomes how do authors frame narratives to transition successfully into dream worlds that resonate with an audience? One particular seminar lesson that made good use of Freytag’s Pyramid was a comparison of the exposition of the movie and text version of *The Wizard of Oz*. Looking at each critically, the seminar was able to identify key elements of the versions that varied and reflected careful choices on the part of the author, screenwriter, and director. These choices help the reader to successfully transition into the world of Oz and back again at the end. By showing the first 20 minutes of the classic 1939 version of *The Wizard of Oz*, it is evident how the exposition is carefully crafted to place individuals in their settings to create the inciting incident of the tornado that whisks Dorothy away on her journey through Oz (see appendix for guided questions to discuss the opening scene).

## Using Literary Theory

A man with one theory is lost. He needs several of them, or lots! He should stuff them in his pockets like newspapers.-Bertolt Brecht<sup>9</sup>

The quote by Brecht is exceptionally important and served as a breakthrough for me during seminar. The Common Core State Standards reflect a major paradigm shift in education. For the English Language Arts, the standards explicitly call for close reading of complex text.<sup>10</sup> While the standards represent a major effort to bring rigor to language arts instruction, I believe the narrow focus on one approach to understanding and engaging with text is short-sighted and harms literacy instruction. Reflecting on the experience of the *Over the Rainbow* seminar, a key element that propelled conversation was not only reading *The Wizard of Oz*, *Peter Pan*, and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, but also reflecting on what critics had to say about each text and its derivative texts.

The interpretations of literary critics helped to supply richness to the discussions that occurred among the seminar participants. This richness of different lens and concepts can be introduced and fostered in the middle school English Language Arts classroom. It occurred to me that in order to reach the same level of discourse in my own classroom with my students, it may benefit my instruction to have students read critical interpretations of works and emulate the writing of critics. Selden et al (1994) observe that when it comes to literary theory and criticism, that students need to be able to make informed and engaged choices about the theories they encounter, take critical stances towards them, and share their insights as emerging readers.<sup>11</sup> With this in mind, this unit serves to introduce students to the concept of literary criticism. It is important that

students learn about some of the perspectives that exist in order to make the informed and engaged choices that Selden alludes to in research. Students will be introduced to five critical lens for looking at text.

*The Wizard of Oz* is a good starting point for using literary criticism because students are so familiar with the text and the narrative. In this particular case, using literary criticism takes a very familiar plot and makes it unfamiliar. Gilman takes a mythological/archetypical/symbolic approach to his reading of *The Wizard of Oz*, focusing on the cyclone as symbol for Dorothy's buried rage and desire to punish others that have "disappointed her."<sup>12</sup> This idea will resonate with students and cause them to think deeply about the function of a symbol and the power that symbols can serve in writing. This would not come out of a regular reading and discussion of the text. A carefully modified excerpt from the Gilman article will help my students to make this realization.

In another critical reading that was done in seminar and I will excerpt for my students, Salman Rushdie took a reader-response approach to thinking about *The Wizard of Oz* when he wrote about his father being like the wizard, "It took me half a lifetime to discover that the Great Oz's apologia pro vita sua fitted my father equally well; that he too was a good man, but a very bad wizard."<sup>13</sup> Another insight that he made in his text was about the "inadequacy of adults" with Dorothy needing to "take control of her own destiny" as a heroine in the world of Oz.<sup>14</sup> The question that I would have students consider is how Rushdie's personal experiences enhance his viewing and understanding of the text, and by extension, how can your experiences bring meaning to the text?

In a different article that I have modified for students, students would consider a feminist take on *The Wizard of Oz*. Paula Kent writes that Dorothy's journey through Oz in which she goes on the necessary journey and makes it home stronger because of what she has endured as an allegory; the allegory can empower girls because it shows "that they [girls] can do anything they put their minds to, even it seems frightening at the time."<sup>15</sup> This concept would be an excellent point to start a conversation with students about Dorothy's journey as a young woman. Having students enter the conversation with critical readings promotes the type of thinking that I would like to see happen in my classroom.

### **Critically Reading *Anthem* and Unpacking Dystopian Literature**

Like *Wizard of Oz*, *Anthem* is a good piece to use with students that is rife with critical readings. Critics tend to focus heavily on Ayn Rand and her philosophies, but there are also many critical readings about *Anthem* that can be modified for students. Since I will have already introduced critical readings from a reader-response lens, mythological/archetypical/symbolic lens, and a feminist lens through *Wizard of Oz*, two critical readings will be used to introduce students to a couple of other angles that critics employ while responding to text about *Anthem*.

In the first critical article that we explore, "The Gospel According to Ayn Rand: Anthem as an Atheistic Theodicy," Michael G. Simental's criticism will get students to consider an aspect of the author's biography and think about Ayn Rand's atheism. Simental shares an anecdote about Rand praying for her cat to get better at a young age and half-heartedly praying that it would get better but knowing it probably wouldn't; he goes on to talk about how she made a choice to be a nonbeliever and how *Anthem* is her "profession of faith and philosophy."<sup>16</sup> This will be of interest to many of my students who are undergoing many religious rights-of-passage such as confirmation. With this critical reading, it will introduce my students to so many critical terms that relate to literary discourse: allusions, diction, allegory, etc. By having students think about the author, it gives them another tool for building connections and understanding the text.

In another modified critical reading, students will engage in a close reading of the names that are used for items throughout the book. This critical lens is important for students because it is specifically named in the Common Core standards and students identify close reading as a strategy by name. I will be sure to highlight that close reading is just **one** of many ways that people look to as they try to decode theme and create understanding while engaging with a literary text [that happens to be popular in K-12 education today]. In the article “Ayn Rand’s *Anthem*: Self-Naming, Individualism, and Anonymity,” Knapp makes several key points about the importance of names:

“The society assigns personal names at birth using a fixed pattern: a word, a single-digit number, a hyphen, and four additional digits. The ... names of the two main characters, according to this system, are *Equality 7-2521* and *Liberty 5-3000*.... The real world and most literary works are rich in names. This novella, however, presents a world from which names have overwhelmingly disappeared. There are no place names...beyond the generic references to *the City* and *the World*.”<sup>17</sup>

Students will consider their thoughts about the generic names and language used for describing places in the text. By framing close reading as one of many ways to approach text, students will gain a cadre of new angles to approach understanding text.

Upon thinking about the critical readings, it will also help students to understand some of the characteristics of dystopian fictional worlds. By understanding some of the conventions of dystopia, students may decide to experiment with it in their own writing. Dystopian literature and themes are prevalent in contemporary novels and books. In fact, many would argue that it is a genre of choice for contemporary young adult readers. Dystopian literature contains a “futuristic, imagined universe in which oppressive societal control and the illusion of a perfect society are maintained through corporate, technological, moral, or totalitarian control...The imagined universe makes a criticism about a current trend, societal norm, or political system.”<sup>18</sup> This type of futuristic, oppressive, and illusory society exists in the novella *Anthem* by Ayn Rand. Rand creates a main character, Equality 7-2521, that has lived a life that is completely state-controlled. His wishes and desires not only are regulated; they are discouraged.

Dystopian literature contains several key characteristics. Information is controlled in a dystopian society. Propaganda is used to control the citizenry.<sup>19</sup> The shaping and spin of information that occurs with a dystopian society is tightly managed and directed by the government to preserve order at all costs. In *Anthem*, Equality 7-2521 is the type of protagonist that is a direct threat to the order of the established society. His desire for knowledge leads him to do things that are in direct opposition to the rules established by the government. His willingness to break these rules makes him dangerous in the eyes of government officials.

A strong leader or concept controls the masses to the point of being worshipped.<sup>20</sup> In *Anthem*, it is evident that the individuals are controlled from cradle to grave. They have no voice in what career to choose, friendships to have, or preferences to enjoy. The main character, Equality 7-2521, is forced to be a street sweeper despite having incredible scientific thoughts and abilities. The strong desire to maintain a society that erased “I” from its’ vocabulary doesn’t allow a character like Equality 7-2521 to exist and entertain independent thought for long. The collectivist society in which the story *Anthem* is set is determined to stamp out independent thinkers when they emerge.

The natural world is banished or not viewed in a positive manner.<sup>21</sup> In *Anthem*, Equality 7-2521 escapes into the forest after his invention that he has essentially rediscovered is not appreciated. He is scorned and feels dejected, plus he knows that he is no longer welcomed in a society that doesn't value and feels threatened by independent thought. Simental writes that the Uncharted Forest is like the biblical Garden of Eden in *Anthem* for Equality 7-2521 since it gets him away from oppression and brings him freedom.<sup>22</sup> Equality 7-2521's thought may have been considered sin-like to the society in which *Anthem* is set, but Rand rewards her protagonist with the being able to escape to the forest to an independent and self-determined life.

The outside world tends to be scary and unknown in dystopian texts.<sup>23</sup> This is true in the world of *Anthem*. Upon leaving the society, Equality 7-2521 is compelled run away and looks to the forest to escape. He doubts himself; the world beyond that he has known of tight security and state control is scary, but he makes the realization that it would be scarier and lethal should he try to remain in his city.<sup>24</sup> In the case of Equality, the fear of the unknown has to be conquered in order to survive. In exploring the conventions of fantasyland; imagination is freest following exile. In this respect *Anthem* darkly adheres to the convention of the main character being allowed to be imaginative when breaking away from everyday circumstances. In the outside world, Equality renames himself, conducts a relationship, and thinks deeply and openly about the world around him.

The citizens are dehumanized and have to conform to governmental expectations; individuality and dissent is dangerous in a dystopian world.<sup>25</sup> In *Anthem*, people are no longer able to think for themselves; science and technology were purposely ignored and degraded in order to maintain order and power. To fight against that, to purposely bring to the government's attention that scientific advances existed and have been ignored, Equality 7-2521's dissent is defiant and could potentially upset the order in *Anthem's* society. It is critical that he is pursued and snuffed out to avoid bringing down the entire society.

### **Realizing the Relationship between Dystopian and Utopian Worlds**

There is a fine line that exists between the utopian and dystopian world. *Anthem* clearly crosses that fine line. In a dystopia, the society appears to be a utopia, but it is repressive and denies individuals rights and responsibilities.<sup>26</sup> Margaret Atwood, in thinking about *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (two popular dystopian texts), captures how fine the line is between utopia and dystopia:

“‘Utopia’ is sometimes said to mean ‘no place,’ from the Greek ‘O Topia,’ but others derive it from ‘eu,’ as in ‘eugenics,’ in which case it would mean ‘healthy place’ or ‘good place.’ Sir Thomas More, in his own sixteenth-century *Utopia*, may have been punning; utopia is the good place that doesn't exist.”<sup>27</sup>

In a criticism of More's *Utopia*, Northrop Frye notes that there are two key literary qualities that are typical to utopias as a literary genre: the behavior of society is described ritually and the described rituals are seemingly irrational acts that become rational when their significance is explained. In a literary utopia, Frye argues that a first person narrator generally guides readers through a society that is dominated by the city or ritual<sup>28</sup>. To take that thought and push it further, it seems that the line for a dystopian society is crossed when that first person narrator takes offense with rituals and irrational acts. The narrator grows to recognize that the difference between appearance and reality is stark and a harsh realization is made that the world that is dysfunctional and escape may be necessary.



This type of realization is made in many popular pieces of dystopian text. In the *Hunger Games*, Katniss makes the realization throughout the series that the only safe place where she can be herself is directly outside of her district. She escapes with other characters periodically to go hunting and get away from the harshness of her daily life in her home district.<sup>29</sup> In the context of the story, Katniss grows increasingly aware of where she is safe and where she is not. She evolves into an almost saint-like figure throughout the series because she decides to act with every new realization of unfairness and inequality that she encounters while performing her duty to the state.

In the eyes of the state in *The Hunger Games*, a utopia has been created with the formation of the districts. This difference in perspective creates the tension that propels the narrative and acts as an antagonist or foil for the valiant actions of the main and supporting characters throughout the text. *The Hunger Games* illustrate the fine lines that exist between utopian and dystopian worlds; the various districts supply the Capitol with what is needed to live a life of excess, while the Capitol provides safety and security against the dark times.<sup>30</sup> What appears to be a utopia to those living in the Capitol is not a utopia for everyone else. The harshness of daily life in the districts makes the Capitol's excesses cruel and unfair. As a leader of the Mockingjay movement, Katniss' actions propel everyone outside of the Capitol to realize the unfairness and inequality that exists throughout the world of Panem.

In the world of *Anthem*, the stark realization that Equality makes grows throughout the book. Like Katniss, he does not start by railing against the state. Exposition needs to be developed before an inciting incident occurs to induce action. We learn about Equality feels cursed for feeling curious and having preferences, but he accepts his life circumstances when he is assigned to be a street sweeper even though he wants to work in the sciences. He makes a realization one day when he stumbles upon a tunnel that contains tracks from the 'Unmentionable Times'; he realizes that he wants to engage in his science experiments even though he knows it is viewed as wrong by the society.<sup>31</sup> For Katniss, the realization occurs when she must go in place of her sister to the Hunger Games.<sup>32</sup> Both come to realize that the rituals and the irrational acts of the society cannot be rationally explained and must find a way to react against or exact revenge against society. Atwood notes that "perfectibility breaks on the rock of dissent;" a dystopia is born when the main character no longer can support the action of unfair state.<sup>33</sup> This clearly happens in *Anthem* and will be easily identified by students.

## **Assessment**

A common pedagogical practice is UbD or Understanding by Design. Wiggins and McTighe (2011) make the following observation about why this type of planning is needed, "Teaching is a means to an end, and planning precedes teaching. The most successful teaching begins, therefore, with clarity about desired learning outcomes and about the evidence that will show that learning has occurred".<sup>34</sup> Carefully planning the assessment for this unit is paramount to its success. This framework for thinking about instruction requires teachers to think about the final, standards-based assessment that will be given to students that assesses mastery of content standards to which both students and teachers are held accountable for demonstrating growth and mastery. By beginning with the end in mind, it is possible to focus instruction on the key activities that will put students on a path to demonstrate their mastery of a skill and standards.

In thinking about the final products of this unit, students will be expected to be able to do two things. The first expectation is that students will be able to take a new text that they have not encountered and identify key aspects of the plot structure using Freytag's Pyramid. Beyond that, students will need to write a critical response to the same piece of text emulating some of the criticisms that have been read in class about the *Wizard of Oz* and *Anthem*. The text "All Summer in a Day" was selected because it is a fantasyland setting

that has a lot that could be said about it, considering all of the critical lens that are explored in the unit. There is also video of the text that is included in the resource section to help differentiate instruction. This will help to elevate student thinking about literature and the quality of student written and oral responses to literature.

The second product of the unit's instruction will require students to take one of their story starts that play with an element of speculative fiction through a full draft and revision process in order to produce a collection of short stories. In order to achieve this final product, a clear path of content knowledge needs to be fully developed to build student capacity in their abilities to both critically read and construct speculative fiction. The following lessons from *Now Write! Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Horror: Speculative Genre Exercises from Today's Best Writers and Teachers* will be used to generate draft material to work from to select a piece and produce a final draft; the creator and an overview of the strategy is included with page numbers from the book in brackets<sup>35</sup> : Jack Ketchum writes about the importance of economy in the start of the a piece of speculative fiction as a means to build suspense [283]; Jule Selbo advises how to choose a speculative genre [7], Brittany Winner writes about how to channel inspiration [47];Elliot Laurence suggests a practice for how to generate unlimited ideas [62]; Raymond Obstfeld writes about the character arc in dystopian characters and creating more authentic characters [95]; Todd Klick writes about how Spielberg and Shakespeare grab 'em in five [121]; Mark Sebanc shows how to ground elements of the fantastic to enhance pieces of speculative fiction [151]; Brianna Winner writes about understanding yourself better through creative writing [203]; Gabrielle Moss advises on ways to create convincing communication between humans and supernatural creatures [269]; and J. Michelle Newman advises ways to make a piece of speculative fiction real [289].

## Implementing District Standards

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Primary Common Core State Standards<sup>36</sup> : RL.6.2-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. RL.6.9-Compare and contrast texts in different forms or genres (e.g., stories and poems; historical novels and fantasy stories) in terms of their approaches to similar themes and topics. RI.6.3-Analyze in detail how a key individual, event, or idea is introduced, illustrated, and elaborated in a text (e.g., through examples or anecdotes). RI.6.6-Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and explain how it is conveyed in the text. W.6.3-Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.

## Sequence of Classroom Activities

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Week one: Introduce the concept of Freytag's Pyramid on an anchor chart. Students will think of stories that they have read and practice mapping out the narrative according to the structure of the pyramid. Students will read and annotate the first five pages of the text, *The Wizard of Oz*. We will discuss the text version before I show the 1939 film version. After showing the first twenty minutes of the film version, we will discuss how the book and film establishes the exposition using the text dependent questions that I have established for

analysis of the exposition of the book and film. We will repeat this for the resolution of the text and film.

Students will be introduced to the concept of literary criticism through the use of an anchor chart of the different lens that different people come to view literature. Students will learn that many mature readers not only read and formulate thoughts about a text, but that adults often consult the thinking of other authors or critics to deepen their own thinking about a reading. I will share what some critics have to say about the exposition and resolution of both the book and the film versions of *The Wizard of Oz*. After reflecting and discussing the criticism of the pieces, students will produce their own version of criticism of the exposition of the book and film version of *The Wizard of Oz*.

Week two-Week four: I will start this portion of the unit by showing the clip of *Anthem* (see teacher resources for link) and discuss the characteristics outlined in the research of this unit of a dystopia. We will alternate reading and discussing *Anthem*, reading modified literary criticism of *Anthem* and Ayn Rand with careful attention paid to introducing each of the literary lens, and trying some of the speculative fiction writing exercises from *Now Write! Science Fiction, Fantasy and Horror: Speculative Genre Exercises from Today's Best Writers and Teachers*.

Students will also practice looking at the text like a critic in response to the reading (see teacher web resources). This requires students to not only cite textual evidence, but they must make connections that are not just text-based and push thoughts about underlying meanings. These responses will take place in a Reading Response Journal made of loose leaf paper.

Week five: Students will be given a performance assessment in which need to read "All Summer in a Day," identify the elements of Freytag's Pyramid, and write a literary criticism of the story similar to the one that we have explored in class.

Week six: Students will select one of their playing speculative fiction writing exercises and build it into a draft. I will confer with writers as they work. Students will compose a final piece that is publishable.

## Teacher Web Resources

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<https://youtu.be/haCXjjiTnRQ>

Professor Steve Sheppard, Economics Department at Williams College, discusses what a critical analysis is and why it is important to teaching. He argues that the litmus test is, "Is it True?" He also values questioning long-held ideas that are believed to be true in order to promote deeper thinking.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C6Ocx6158ik>

The Critical Analysis Body Paragraph Tutorial by Holly Wenning focuses on how to write a critical analysis body paragraph. It is very similar to how other units that are taught throughout the year approach paragraph writing but using more critical language. This paragraph she wrote will help my students as they attempt to improve the sophistication of their responses to literature.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wm1C0\\_mu8eo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wm1C0_mu8eo)

The link above is to a dramatic interpretation/summary of *Anthem*. It captures some of the main thematic issues and would be a tremendous asset to show to talk about the mood of the text.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cV-rzGx21rw>

The link above is the film version of "All Summer in a Day." This will help to support the summative assessment of the unit. Note: the film version has a different ending than the short story.

<http://www.editorskylar.com/litcrit.html>

This website helps to give a concise explanation of the different type of literary criticisms that exist. The information was modified for 6th grade students in what will be a chart when the unit is instructed, Reading like a Critic.

<https://goo.gl/IRNUo8>

This is an image of Freytag's Pyramid with the graphic of a fantastic tale superimposed over it for visual learners.

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## Notes

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