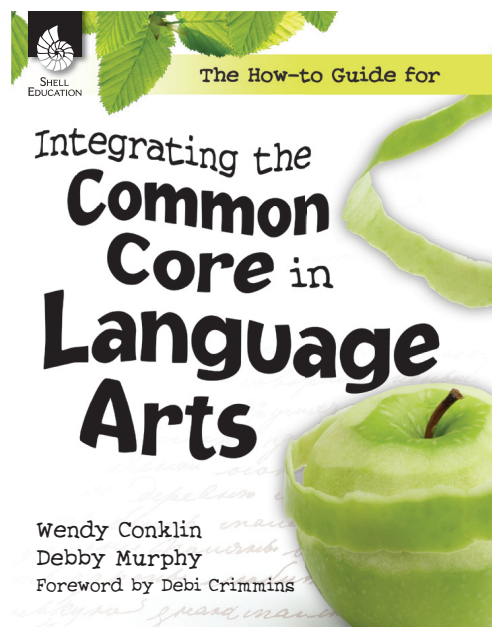


Sample Pages from

Integrating the Common Core in Language Arts



The following sample pages are included in this download:

- Table of Contents
- Introduction excerpt
- sample chapter selection



The How-to Guide for

Integrating the **Common Core** in **Language Arts**

Wendy Conklin
Debby Murphy
Foreword by Debi Crimmings



Integrating the
**Common
Core** in
**Language
Arts**

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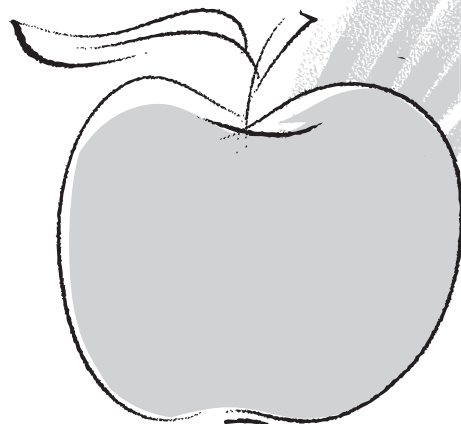
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Chapter



Empowering Teachers

We have to be continually jumping off cliffs and developing our wings on the way down.

—Kurt Vonnegut

Perhaps the implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in your district has not caused a rise in teachers' lounge therapy sessions, partial hair loss, or extreme caffeine consumption. But the truth of the matter is that these standards have caused many good teachers to lose some much needed sleep as they wonder: *How do I integrate these standards into what I already thought I was supposed to teach? Do we have to develop a new curriculum? How do I go about really understanding how to implement these standards with my students? What should I do to make sure that my students are successful?*

The Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects lay out a rigorous literacy journey for students by articulating the skills and understandings that students need for college and career readiness in multiple disciplines. “As a natural outgrowth of meeting the charge to define college and career readiness, the standards also lay out a vision of what it means to be a literate person in the twenty-first century. Indeed, the skills and understandings students are expected to demonstrate have wide applicability outside the classroom or workplace” (CCSS, <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy>). At this point in implementation of the ELA Common Core State Standards in your state, you have all probably been part of professional learning to “unpack” the standards—the thinking behind the CCSS, the organization of the CCSS, what the standards say for your grade level. If you are still a bit fuzzy on

all of this material, see Chapter 2 for a good review. But before we begin, it is essential that we understand the CCSS and what we need to teach our students.

The CCSS, as stated, provide educators the *what* for literacy learning. Laid out before them, teachers see clear, specific expectations for their grade level. Teachers are also encouraged to examine the standards vertically in order to understand the breadth and range of how the standards evolve. But the CCSS do not provide the *how* for us. We have the latitude in the CCSS to design instruction that effectively addresses where our students are as learners

and to differentiate that instruction toward the standards based on their strengths and needs (2010,4). In this book, as you reflect on the *how* of CCSS implementation, you will find ideas and strategies that you can really use day to day in your classroom. As you read, we pledge to be both your cheerleaders and your coaches as we explore the possibilities of the *how* together.

We have the latitude in the CCSS to design instruction that effectively addresses where our students are as learners and to differentiate that instruction toward the Standards based on their strengths and needs. In this book, as you reflect on the how of CCSS implementation, you will find ideas and strategies that you can really use day to day in your classroom.

The most significant piece for students as they take on the high expectations of the standards is you! Many experts recognize that a strong, effective teacher is the key for student achievement—more than any specific curriculum or program (Allington and Johnston 2001; Darling-Hammond 1999; Duffy 1997). After observing multiple teachers from six states in actual instructional contexts, Richard Allington (2002) concludes unequivocally that “expertise matters.” Your content understanding, your instructional decisions, and your relationships with students frame that expertise.

We recognize that exemplary teachers are crucial to the implementation of the CCSS. Their choices in the *how* ensure that students learn. These teachers know that powerful instruction takes time—long blocks of time for students to actually engage in reading and writing and speaking and listening. They plan for extensive experiences with text where students



engage actively and repeatedly in authentic contexts with the strategies and skills called for in the standards. They design meaningful literacy tasks in which students interact with text and their peers. The teachers embed literacy throughout the school day, and they recognize that reading and writing are essential tools during content-area learning as well. We have several examples within the chapters of this book from real teacher experts who can show you how they accomplished this integrated literacy learning.

Along with other expert teachers, we believe that strong instruction begins with sharing the *how* with students—how the strategy looks, how to do the strategy, how to apply the standard. We craft explicit models and demonstrations to bring new learning forward. We demonstrate the *how* through significant, carefully orchestrated experiences with text. The CCSS are all about text; high expectations are set forth for students to deeply comprehend grade-level complex text. The expert teacher provides students with a plethora of text, from both literary and informational texts, for students to read across the curriculum. We show you how to move from close reading of a text to modeled lessons with text, from small instructional groups to independent reading, immersing your students in “just right” text as well as in text experiences that challenge them at the cusp of their ability.

The heart and soul of the CCSS rest in students thoughtfully engaging with text and carefully uncovering the layers of meaning in text. We see teachers who are masters at weaving provocative questions into academic discourse about texts and students who respond eagerly. Yet we also find that many teachers need a framework to get them started to ensure that they ask rigorous, thought-provoking, and text-dependent questions that send students back into the text to support and defend their thinking and claims. Many standards call for this higher-order thinking, and we show you how to ask questions that will stimulate students’ thinking and move

Along with other expert teachers, we believe that strong instruction begins with sharing the “how” with students—how the strategy looks, how to do the strategy, how to apply the standard. We craft explicit models and demonstrations to bring new learning forward. We demonstrate the how through significant, carefully orchestrated experiences with text.



Chapter



Selecting Text That Works

The text difficulty level is not the real issue. Instruction is. Teachers can scaffold and support students which will determine the amount of their learning and literacy independence.... The idea is not to either limit a student to a low-level text or allow him or her to struggle without support in a difficult text, but instead to provide texts and couple them with instruction.

—Fisher, Frey, and Lapp 2012, 7–8

Suppose you were asked to rank the following books based on their text complexity. How would you rank these books from easiest (1) to most difficult (5)?

_____ *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee

_____ *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* by J.K. Rowling

_____ *Bubble Trouble* by Margaret Mahy (Horn Book Winner)

_____ *The Third Wheel (Diary of a Wimpy Kid, Book 7)* by Jeff Kinney

_____ *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck

Did you consider word length or familiarity? Were you thinking of word frequency, or the number of times a word appears in text? Perhaps you looked for simple, compound, complex, and compound complex sentences and ranked these texts accordingly. Maybe you considered text cohesion where a high level of text cohesion makes it easier for a reader to read and a low cohesion forces the reader to make many of the connections needed to comprehend the text.

Quite often, these factors are used to determine the instructional level of text. If your answers are “yes” to any of these factors, you were using *quantitative* measures to position text by difficulty. *Quantitative* is derived from the word *quantity*, having to do with numbers, and in this case, the readability and levels of these books can actually be evaluated using numerical formulas.

Qualitative

Quantitative

Reader and Task

There are multiple “readability” formulas used by various companies to “level” text. In these cases, the task of measuring and evaluating quantitative features of text is most often accomplished using computer software. The CCSS refer to Lexile® levels of quantitative text features (developed by MetaMetrics) to exemplify a range of text complexity. These Lexile® ranges have been, in turn, realigned to meet the rigor of the CCSS grade level text complexity bands.

Figure 3.1 Text Complexity and Lexile® Ranges

Text Complexity Grade Band in the CCSS	Lexile® Ranges Aligned to CCSS Expectations
K–1	N/A
2–3	420–820
4–5	740–1010
6–8	925–1185
9–10	1050–1335
11–CCR	1185–1385

Quantitative measures are used to assign a readability level to a text based on factors such as syntax and sentence length, text cohesion, word length, word frequency, and word familiarity.

- ⇒ Syntax and sentence length place varying processing demands on the reader encountering multiple sentence structures, sentence length (words per sentence), and features such as dependent/independent clauses, prepositional phrases, pronouns, adverbs, and adjectives, etc.



⇒ Text cohesion (addressed in the Coh-Metrix system of measuring readability) attempts to examine the ways text is held together semantically to support or challenge the reader (see CCSS, Appendix A). Factors such as concrete language, repetition, and transitions serve to connect the text for the reader by establishing meaningful relationships between words, sentences, paragraphs, and ideas. A highly cohesive text would support a reader and be easier to read. A text with lower cohesion would greatly challenge a reader. Several important points to consider include the following:

1. The analysis of syntax and sentence length is based on the overall text. Therefore, the text could vary in difficulty between pages or even paragraphs.
2. A shorter sentence could be difficult for a reader to comprehend based on the concept presented, vocabulary, or inference necessary to comprehend the author's message.
3. Text cohesion is not yet calibrated to the CCSS text complexity bands, but it does provide a variety of new factors to consider in quantitative analysis of text (see CCSS, Appendix A).

⇒ At the word level, readability formulas for text complexity consider the word challenge level of text. How long are the words? How many syllables do they have? How often do the words occur in the text? How familiar are the words to a reader of that text? How frequently do these words generally appear in print? Nonfiction text is often assigned a higher quantitative level because of the frequent occurrence of content-specific vocabulary. These words are counted each time they appear in a text to determine the overall text level. While longer words or less-frequently encountered words, especially specific content-area words, do increase the quantitative complexity of a text, we have often encountered first grade students who can easily read long words such as *transportation* or *hippopotamus* once they have had an initial introduction to the word and its meaning. Therefore, this new word would not continue to be a challenge for the students when it appears multiple times in a text. Similarly, we have seen students identified as “below-grade-level readers” who successfully read a grade-level nonfiction text on a personal high-interest topic. This happens when

the majority of the content-area words and concepts are familiar to the reader. For example, Evan, a sixth grade student reading independently at the second–third grade text complexity band was a shark fanatic, and the quantitative features of a higher Lexile® level shark book did not keep him from enthusiastically tackling the challenge and reading the text.

Returning to our original consideration of the five texts you ranked at the beginning of this chapter, if you used only *quantitative* measures to describe the complexity of these books, based on Lexile® levels, the books from our example are ranked like this:

1. *The Grapes of Wrath*—680, grade level band 2nd–3rd
2. *To Kill a Mockingbird*—870, grade level band 4th–5th
3. *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*—980, grade level band 5th–8th
4. *The Third Wheel (Diary of a Wimpy Kid)*—1060, grade level band 6th–9th
5. *Bubble Trouble*—1240, grade level band 9th–12th

Does this ranking shock you? Many teachers are surprised to find that *Diary of Wimpy Kid* falls at such a high grade level band because they have witnessed first graders who can't get enough of this book. This information raises many questions: Is it appropriate to give second grade students *The Grapes of Wrath* to read? Does it mean that students in 10th grade would be reading a picture book called *Bubble Trouble*? Although “readable,” it is unlikely that *Grapes of Wrath* would be an appropriate text for a second grade student any more than *Bubble Trouble* would be a high-interest text for a 10th grader. But, the rich language of this picture book makes it a wonderful adult-directed read-aloud for pre-kindergarten children through second graders. It is important to keep in mind that “ultimately it is the reader who decides the difficulty of a text” (Fisher, Frey, Lapp 2012, 22) as he or she attempts to read that text. While understanding the quantitative level of texts is important, it is not the *only* factor teachers should consider when determining complexity of texts.

Return to our ranking of the five texts. Maybe you thought about quantitative features as you ordered the texts by perceived difficulty or challenge, but perhaps you considered other factors as well while you leveled these texts. Did you think about the explicit or implicit levels of meaning in the text? Perhaps you considered the structure of the text as either being conventional and straightforward or unconventionally organized with flashbacks, flash forwards, or cause and effect relationships. Could it be that you thought about the language clarity, content-specific words, and the literal versus figurative vocabulary used in the texts? Maybe you looked at the knowledge demands—the background needed to successfully negotiate the meaning of the text.

If your answers are “yes” to any of these factors, you were using *qualitative* measures to order these texts. *Qualitative* is derived from the word *quality*, having to do with the particular attributes, features and characteristics, and level of meaning within these books.

Qualitative

Quantitative

Reader and Task

In thinking about text structure, these are the questions you might have asked:

- ⇒ How complex is the structure of the text?
- ⇒ Is the story told in chronological order, or are there flashbacks and other manipulations of time?
- ⇒ Is any informational text laid out in a clear format of a main idea with details and simple graphics to help convey meaning, or are other nonfiction text structures present with more sophisticated graphics that may provide information outside the actual text?

Considering the language conventionality and clarity, you could have asked:

- ⇒ Does the text contain language that is familiar, clear, and straightforward?
- ⇒ Is the text “conversational” with lots of dialogue, or is it more academic and content-oriented?
- ⇒ Does the text contain an abundance of academic vocabulary, words with multiple meanings, or figurative and/or unfamiliar language?

Looking at the levels of meaning and knowledge demands of text, you may have thought:

- ☞ What are the themes or main ideas of this text? Are there multiple layers of meaning and complexity?
- ☞ Is the purpose of the text explicitly given, or does the reader have to infer it from reading?
- ☞ How much background knowledge would a student need in order to understand this selection?
- ☞ Does the text, if discipline-specific, support the reader by building knowledge and understanding within the text?

(See the chart in the CCSS Appendix A, page 6, for further elaboration on qualitative measures of text.)

If you considered these qualitative features of text, the list of text that you made might have looked more like this:

1. *Bubble Trouble*—1240, grade level band 9th–12th
2. *The Third Wheel (Diary of a Wimpy Kid, Book 7)*—1060, grade level band 6th–9th
3. *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*—980, grade level band 5th–8th
4. *To Kill a Mockingbird*—870, grade level band 4th–5th
5. *The Grapes of Wrath*—680, grade level band 2nd–3rd

Return to our ranking of the five texts one last time. Perhaps you considered factors other than just quantitative and qualitative as you leveled these texts. Did you base your rating on what your students would be motivated to read? Maybe you determined the list according to your students' personal backgrounds and experiences. You might have wondered about their purpose for reading the texts.

If your answers are “yes” to any of these factors, you were considering *reader and task measures*.

Reflecting on both the reader and the task of reading and responding to a selected text is the final segment of the text complexity triangle. For this factor, the teacher's personal knowledge of students gained through assessments, observations, and informal discussions becomes a strong basis for selecting instructional text for students or supporting them as they select their own text for independent reading. When students choose their own texts based on their interests or the instructional task at hand, they become invested in the reading process. In turn, students experience a sense of self-efficacy as they encounter reading challenges and endeavor to problem-solve tricky parts “on the run” using known, effective strategies in order to continue reading.

We begin to broaden our thinking and consider the context that surrounds the text, pondering questions such as:

- ⇒ Are the students motivated to read the text?
- ⇒ Are they interested in the topic?
- ⇒ What is their knowledge of the subject prior to beginning to read?
- ⇒ What response or task are they being asked to do after reading the text?

Reader and task considerations are powerful factors impacting student reading success and do not always align with quantitative or qualitative measures of the level where we “think” a student might be reading. When students have read previous, easier books in a series such as *The Diary of a Wimpy Kid* or *Harry Potter*, or have seen a movie based on the book, they often want to read another book about those characters because their schema is established. If a text is popular among students—“everybody” is reading it—then students might want to read the book no matter how simple or challenging the text is for that reader. We often smile thinking about the kindergartener some years back seen “reading” *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone*. As the child “read,” he or she carefully turned a page at a time, scanning the text from top to bottom. The child seemed oblivious to the fact that the book was upside down! On the other hand, Jordan, a precocious, strong reader successfully tackled *The Lightning Thief* by Rick Riordan as a first-grader. Many students enjoy informational texts written by favorite authors on elevated text levels

because of the familiarity of the topic or strong text features like illustrations, photographs, and cut-away diagrams that support meaning as seen in books from the *DK Eyewitness Books* series. Other students like historical fiction, especially when their text choices are linked with current social studies content. There is little doubt that this third measure of text complexity directly affects students' reading interest and stamina!

If you thought about reader and task considerations, your list might have looked more like this:

1. *The Third Wheel (Diary of a Wimpy Kid, Book 7)*—1060, grade level band 6th–9th
2. *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*—980, grade level band 5th–8th
3. *Bubble Trouble*—1240, grade level band 9th–12th
4. *To Kill a Mockingbird*—870, grade level band 4th–5th
5. *The Grapes of Wrath*—680, grade level band 2nd–3rd

According to the CCSS Appendix A, *The standards presume that all **three elements** will come into play when text complexity and appropriateness are determined* (5). This means that teachers must simultaneously address the quantitative, qualitative, and reader and task factors when selecting texts for close readings, anchor lessons, and instructional groups, or when supporting students in finding “just right” texts for independent reading.

How to Determine Text Complexity

Now that you understand the three levels of text complexity, let's focus on how to determine complex texts appropriate for your students. While there are many ways to determine text complexity, we would like to propose a set of four easy steps:

1. Consider the quantitative measures of the text.
2. Analyze the qualitative measures of the text.



Bringing It All Together

Skills—whether about decoding, comprehension, fluency, language, writing, genre, whatever—are nothing more than a means to an end; they are not ends unto themselves. Their worth equals their contributions to reading and writing growth and text understanding.

—P. David Pearson 2004, slide 12

Back in 2004, before there were Common Core State Standards, P. David Pearson made the statement above at an international conference. In the same presentation, he urged educators to merge authentic student activity and “ambitious instruction” into a powerful curriculum that provides “skills that give kids independence, writing opportunities that promote their communicative competence, and reading opportunities that promote engagement, motivation, and intellectual challenge” (Pearson 2004, slide 74). This same commentary seems just as applicable today as we attempt to ensure that our students receive a rigorous, challenging curriculum delivered by empowered teachers immersed in effective pedagogy and focused on successful student literacy learning.

The Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts frame the *what* of our curriculum. As teachers, we must have within our repertoire a plethora of strategies built on sound research and practice to drive the *how* of planning for and delivering targeted, engaging, and effective instruction toward these standards. Based on research from 1998, it was noted that if teachers set aside 30 minutes to teach each identified state and/or national content standard or benchmark from elementary school through high school, it would take about nine more years of school for students to learn them all (Marzano and Kendall 2000; Tomlinson and McTighe 2006). What a daunting task for educators! As we examine the multiple standards and supporting standards

in ELA across Reading: Literature, Reading: Informational Text, Writing, Language, Speaking and Listening, and, for elementary, Foundational Skills, we acknowledge that students have a monumental and complex “staircase” of learning to surmount each year. Even though we now have the CCSS to guide us, we continually consider how to best meet the rigorous demands of the standards within the confines of our instructional year. This goal is best met when we thoughtfully ponder how the standards interplay through our “ambitious instruction” and how we integrate them into carefully orchestrated, authentic tasks for our students.

When you think about how the CCSS impact your instructional decisions and resulting student engagement in this literacy work, always begin with your grade-level specific standards and then reflect on how a variety of standards, both grade-level standards and previous standards, naturally come together as students engage with text through reading and writing. While you may have a particular standard as your main teaching focus, likely a multitude of other standards underpin your lesson and your students’ interactions during the learning. Therefore, many of the standards (and supporting standards) are addressed intentionally—and sometimes even incidentally—as students engage in powerful, connected reading and writing experiences. Add in some content-area reading and writing during both the ELA time and subject-specific instruction, and all at once, through careful planning, the standards intertwine and become quite doable through multiple encounters and contexts during the school year.

Even though we now have the CCSS to guide us, we continually consider how to best meet the rigorous demands of the standards within the confines of our instructional year.



We always appreciate a few models to help us envision how the content covered in a professional book comes together in actual classroom instruction. All the good pedagogy—the how—that we have discussed within this book comes into play in the following examples; the CCSS require this from us. If we want our students to meet the complexity of these standards, we must build our instruction in a comprehensive, purposeful, integrated manner centered on the standards and then



carefully monitor that instruction, watching for the intended results. Together, all of our focused effort and instructional expertise *will* bring our students—your students—to that level of deep understanding and higher-order thinking called for within the CCSS.

As you read the following examples, keep the appropriate grade-level CCSS ELA Standards at hand. (And for the middle school example, also have the ELA History/Social Studies Standards available.) We only identify for you one main teaching focus in each of the two examples. After you read the lessons, scan the standards/supporting standards for each exemplar grade level and see how many of them are actually encompassed in the lessons. You may be surprised how seamlessly these teachers enveloped multiple standards into their instruction.

Elementary School Example

A second grade teacher previews her teaching focus based on the CCSS and cross-checks the students' readiness for the standards she selects with a preassessment and informal observations in order to ascertain the just-right entry level for her instruction on the standard(s). In this case, the teacher plans her primary focus on word meaning based on several combined Reading and Language Standards: *Students describe how words and phrases contribute to meaning in a story, an informational text, and a poem and demonstrate an understanding of word relationships or nuances in word meaning.* She selects two read-aloud texts and a close reading of a poem to model the focus and provide shared practice. She intends to extend the students' practice through small-group instruction and independent reading. Finally, she will wrap up the experience with the students using descriptive language to write an individual composition (either a short informational text or an informational poem).

Because the students are also studying animal diversity in science, the teacher chooses three texts about fireflies for her lesson. The first text is a fiction text titled *Fireflies* by Julie Brinckloe (1985). The second text is a grade-level informational text about fireflies. The last text is a poem by Paul Fleischman called "Fireflies," excerpted from *Joyful Noise: Poems for Two Voices* (This poem is found in its entirety in the CCSS, Appendix B, page 52). The teacher also creates a few PowerPoint slides with photographs of fireflies (and some background music) to open her lesson.

As the students gather on the rug in the reading area, the teacher tells her students to quietly view the slides of fireflies. When the presentation is finished, she asks the students to share their observations with a buddy sitting near them. The teacher drops in on several partnerships to listen to their conversations (a process that she continues throughout the lesson whenever the students share between themselves). She hears many personal stories about the students' experiences with fireflies as well as conversations about how cool fireflies are when they light up. Then, the teacher requests that the students view the slides one more time and, this time, think about words that describe the fireflies or what they are doing. Once again, the students share their thinking with their partners. The teacher jots down some of the words that they suggest on large index cards, one word per card, and places the words in a large pocket chart. The students read the words together. They talk about how some of the words describe how the fireflies look and some tell what the fireflies do. They sort the words into two groups based on these reflections—describing words, or “awesome adjectives,” and action words, or “vivid verbs”—terms that they have learned in prior lessons. There are three word cards that tell about parts of the firefly—*antennae*, *wings*, *light*—so the students decide to make one more group of naming words, or “on-the-nose nouns.”

Next, the teacher reads the book *Fireflies* to her students. As she reads, she asks the students to think about the words that the author uses to really paint a picture of fireflies in the reader's mind. The students have done this type of activity many times before, and they are ready to explore the author's word choice. The teacher stops several times to reread a chunk of text and comment on her thinking about the author's language. She also stops several times to let the students share out some of the word choices that they think are particularly effective.

At the conclusion of the story, the teacher first gives the students time to react to the content of the text and talk about what they noticed. They especially want to talk about why the boy chose to let the fireflies go. The teacher then writes on cards any words that the students identified to describe the fireflies and their actions. The students help her sort the cards into the three groups. Several students are excited that they mentioned some of the same words that Brinckloe used in her book. The students read the words from each group and discuss which words they think best help them “picture” fireflies.



The teacher now shares an informational text about fireflies. She reads several pages and then lets students discuss some of the facts they heard about fireflies. She especially focuses on two pages that describe the special trait of bioluminescence and how fireflies use their light to attract mates. The teacher asks the students how this author used special word choice to help the reader picture details about the fireflies. The students choose several words to add to the pocket chart. Of course, they want to have the long six-syllable word *bioluminescent*!

At the conclusion of the lesson, each student is given a large sticky note. They write an informational sentence about a firefly, using at least two words from the cards on the word chart. The students read their sentences to the class as the teacher comments on their great word choice and how effectively their words painted a picture in the reader's mind.

On the second day, the teacher continues to focus on the meaning of words and phrases using a close reading of the poem "Fireflies." The poem is displayed on a chart or projected onto a screen. The teacher elicits the support of another teacher or older student to be the second "voice" for the first dramatic reading of the poem to the students. After the students hear the poem, they turn to a partner and share their responses to the content. The teacher drops in and listens to their comments, probing their thinking with questions. The students then share out their thoughts with the group. The teacher has several questions prepared if she needs to prime the students' thinking pumps.

- ⇒ Why did the poet write this poem this way? Why are there two speakers?
- ⇒ What do the speakers in the poem know about real fireflies? Why do you think that?
- ⇒ What are the speakers' feelings about fireflies? How do you know?

The teacher is thrilled when several students immediately note that the talking back and forth in the poem and word repetition is like the flashing of the fireflies back and forth in the dark. They even use their new word, *bioluminescent*. The students like the comparison that fireflies are like writers. Many students point out all the rhyming words. Some of the students notice that there are many words in the poem that begin with *f* or *fl*. The teacher discovers that the students guide the majority of this first discussion with their comments, and she only needs to extend their thinking from time to time.

Now the teacher is ready for a second reading of the poem. She asks the students to think about the mind pictures that the poet creates with his word choices. She divides the students into two groups to represent the two voices in the poem. The students read the poem back and forth between the voices as the teacher and her helper read and point to the words. After the students share-read the poem, the teacher tells them that there are a few hard words in the poem that the reader needs to understand to grasp the deep meaning of the poem. The teacher uses a picture and a kid-friendly definition to help students understand the meaning of *parchment*. The group goes back and reads the section with this word, and they talk about how the light of the fireflies is like ink on the black paper of the night. The teacher directs a similar process with the words *calligraphers*, *penmanship*, and the phrase *fleeting graffiti*. Then the group rereads the poem.

The teacher poses several of these questions for the students to discuss with their partners and then share out with the group:

- ⇒ Which words or phrases did the poet use to help you make mind pictures (images) of the fireflies? (The students add any new words to cards for the pocket chart.)
- ⇒ How do those mind pictures help us understand the actions of fireflies?
- ⇒ How do the mind pictures of the fireflies that the poet creates make the fireflies seem like people?
- ⇒ What does the poet want the reader to think about fireflies? How do you know?
- ⇒ How is this poem like the two books we read? How is it different?

To complete this day's lesson, the teacher and students work together to negotiate the text for a short paragraph about fireflies. They focus on incorporating words or phrases from their word cards as they write an informational description of fireflies. The teacher "shares the pen" with different students as the students work together to compose the text on a group chart. The teacher holds students accountable for what they already know about writing sentences, using high-frequency words, breaking words into chunks to spell them, and other applicable foundational skills and writing conventions. The students reread the text frequently as they write together another text that incorporates some of their new vocabulary.

During the next week, the teacher moves the teaching focus into small group instruction. Based on where students are as readers, she places them in four groups to read two good-fit paired texts in a guided small group context. Each group has a literary text (story or poem) and an informational text on the same topic. (The topics selected are *bees*, *butterflies*, and *ants*.) The teacher meets with the groups as the students read the two texts and talk about the important facts and details presented. The teacher serves as a scribe and works with each group to create a graphic organizer that identifies some of the significant facts from their texts about their insect. Then, the students work together to collect and record at least 10 words or short phrases that are used in the texts and effectively create mind pictures for the reader.

Finally, the students choose to write a short informational text or an informational poem about their insect. They focus on including important details about their insect, using words that create descriptive mind pictures. They have both their group's graphic organizer and word charts to use as tools as they write. The teacher conducts several model lessons during the writing process depending on the students' needs, such as how to write an effective lead for an informational text. She is pleased that four students choose to write a poem, and she meets several times with these students to talk about ways they can organize or format their poem. One student, inspired by Fleischman, writes a poem titled "Bees: A Poem for a Buzzy Voice." Needless to say, he uses a lot of onomatopoeia!

The teacher conducts individual revision conferences with her students, and the students confer frequently with their writing partners. The students use a revision rubric and a familiar class editing checklist to prepare their writing for publishing, and then they sign up for an editing conference with the teacher. The experience ends with each student publishing their writing with illustrations. Together, they celebrate their success by reading their personal favorite descriptive sentences or poetry lines—mind pictures—from their work.

1. How did the primary teaching focus echo throughout the four to five days of instruction?

2. While there was a primary focus, the teacher had many other standards intentionally in play as she planned her instruction. Did the teacher include standards from all five of the strands? How? Which standards did you identify embedded in her teaching?
3. How can you be intentional in incorporating multiple standards into your instruction?

Middle School Example

Over the course of several days, an eighth grade middle school class explores the mindset of several American revolutionaries by tracing these individuals' thinking before and during the American Revolution. The specific focus of the unit is *Students analyze how the events and dialogue in texts and primary sources reveal aspects of a character (in this case, a Revolutionary War figure), and then students utilize their analysis and research to write an argument in response to a guiding question based on that character's life, supporting their claims with clear reasons and relevant textual evidence.* This unit of study begins with the questions *What's worth fighting for in life? Why?* Students study the impact of these questions for identified American revolutionaries based on the events, people, and ideas of that period in history. A teacher and student-built text set that includes a variety of informational texts, historical fiction, video documentaries, and primary sources provides the necessary resources for the unit. Listed below are just a few examples of the multigenre, multileveled, and multimodal texts that were included in this text set:

- ⇒ *Patriots in Boston* Reader's Theater (Teacher Created Materials)
- ⇒ The Account of the Boston Massacre from Captain Thomas Preston, British Army
- ⇒ The Boston Gazette and County Journal Account of the Boston Massacre, March 12, 1770
- ⇒ "The Rich Lady Over the Sea," an authentic song from the Boston Tea Party time period, <http://www.contemplator.com/america/richlady.html>
- ⇒ Map of Boston Harbor found at <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/cph.3c34241>

